MY FATHER'S BUSINESS

Sermons for Children

C. E. JEFFERSON

MY FATHER'S BUSINESS

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The World's Christmas Tree

THOMAS Y. CROWELL & CO.
New York

MY FATHER'S BUSINESS

A SERIES OF SERMONS TO CHILDREN

BY

CHARLES EDWARD JEFFERSON

Pastor of Broadway Tabernacle, New York

NEW YORK

THOMAS Y. CROWELL & CO.

PUBLISHERS

BV4315
.J4

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Published, September, 1909

©Sep. 10, 1909
CLA 246662
SEP 11 1909

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I

LINE UPON LINE

"For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." ISAIAH 28: 10.

Preached Sunday Morning
May 13, 1900

LINE UPON LINE

קו צו לצו צו לצו קו לקו קו לקו ועיר שם ועיר שם׃

THE Old Testament was written, as you know, in Hebrew, and in order that you may know what the language of the Old Testament is like I want to give you a quotation from the Hebrew: *"Tsav la tsav, tsav la tsav; qav la qav, qav la qav; z'eir sham, z'eir sham."* As some of you may not be able to remember these unusual words, allow me to give it to you now in English: "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." You will find the words recorded in the 10th verse of the 28th chapter of Isaiah.

Most of you, I suppose, have never read

this chapter in Isaiah, and if any of you have read it, I suspect you have not made much out of it. And that is not at all surprising, for often big folks when they read this chapter do not have an altogether easy time. I want, therefore, to pinch a piece of it off and shoot light through it, that you may see what an interesting chapter it really is.

In order to understand Isaiah you must use your imagination. The imagination is the power of the mind which sees things in pictures. Boys and girls are rich in imagination. In that respect they are like the prophets. No one can understand a prophet unless he has an imagination and uses it.

The first thing you must see is the City of Samaria. There it is on the summit of a hill. The hill is the shape of an egg. The slopes of the hill are covered with vine-

yards. All around the hill there are lovely valleys, and the sides of these valleys are clothed with olive trees. Do you see the city with its towers green with ivy, with its gardens of bloom, and with its hillsides beautiful with vines and olive trees? If you see that, you see what Isaiah saw.

Samaria is a wicked city. Many of its men and women are bad. They live in laziness and sin. They spend much of their time in eating big dinners. And at these dinners they drink wine, many of them drinking until they are drunk. Leading men of Samaria have a fashion of putting an enemy into their mouth which steals away their brains. There they are, lying half drunk on their cushions while their nation is rushing on to ruin. If you see that you see what Isaiah saw.

We are now ready for the first verse in the chapter. "Woe unto you, drunkards!

Your beauty is a fading flower. God's storm is coming from the north, and you will be overwhelmed." In order to startle these men and make them realize what a dreadful fate is hanging over them, the prophet paints four striking pictures. He says, "Woe unto you drunkards, the enemy from the north will beat you down like a hail storm. You will be swept away as with a flood. You will be trampled into the dust under victorious feet. You will be like a fig ripe in the month of June, fully two months before the time for figs, and just as a man when he finds a June fig is so delighted with a delicacy so rare, that no sooner does he get it into his hand than he puts it into his mouth; so the moment the enemy from the north gets you into his clutches he will swallow you!" All this fills up the first seven verses of this wonderful chapter.

Then the prophet turns to Jerusalem. He looks at the politicians and leaders and merchants and even the preachers, and sees that they, like the lords and ladies in Samaria, are lazy and selfish and drunken. With sadness he says, "These my countrymen reel and stagger. They cannot see straight or think straight. Their eyes totter, their mind wabbles."

While Isaiah pours forth his warnings, his countrymen say to one another with mocking sarcasm: "Whom is this man talking to? Does he take us for babies? Does he suppose that we have just been weaned? Why does he feed us on such nursery stuff?" Then they begin to mimic him. They think he is monotonous, and that his language is babyish, and so they ape his tones and language after this fashion: "Tsav la tsav, tsav la tsav; qav la qav, qav la qav." Can't you imagine you hear

them?—that little toper with the high shrill voice saying: "Tsav la tsav, tsav la tsav"?—that bloated sot saying, with drunken accent: "Qav la qav, qav la qav"?—that old wine bibber, with his deep bass voice, saying in taunting tones: "Z'eir sham, z'eir sham"?

The prophet listens to their mimicry, and is not silenced by it. Turning on them he says: "God will speak to you monotonously in another way by and by. This enemy from the north will say to you: "Tsav la tsav, tsav la tsav; qav la qav, qav la qav; z'eir sham, z'eir sham." And he will say it in a way from which there shall be no escape. When the time comes for God to speak to you, you will find a monotony in woe, and because of your sins you will be captured and broken and ruined. That is the meaning of the chapter down through verse 13.

I have taken my text from this chapter this morning, because boys and girls sometimes talk and act very much like the drunkards in Jerusalem. Strange to say, boys and girls sometimes get tipsy. I do not mean that they drink wine or gin or whiskey, but there are other things besides spirituous liquors that cause intoxication. Any poison which upsets the mind makes one drunk. The soul is a palace. At the center of the palace there is a throne. On the throne there is a king. And the name of that king is reason. If any poison breaks into the palace and topples reason from its throne, the soul immediately reels and staggers like a drunken man. For instance, it is possible to be drunk with anger. A person may be so angry that he cannot see straight or think straight or talk straight. In a fit of anger one does not always know just what he is doing. In a spasm of anger-drunkenness a

boy or girl or man or woman may do those things for which afterward he is heartily ashamed.

Hate is another poison which makes the soul drunk. When we hate a person we become as blear-eyed as a toper. We cannot see clearly, and make all sorts of false and foolish statements. A person may get drunk on pride. He may become puffed up, and go swaggering through the town with all the silly bluster of a drunkard. Self-conceit also has made many a person drunk. A self-conceited man may hold his head so high as to cause his brain to grow dizzy, so that he cannot recognize old acquaintances when he meets them on the street.

In all these various ways it is possible for even boys and girls to lose their heads. But one of the worst poisons which you can ever take into your heart and mind is the poison

of disobedience. Sometimes when parents speak to their children about things which they ought to do, or ought not to do, the children get off by themselves and say, "Do they take us for babies, do they think we don't know anything?" Whenever a boy or girl says that, he is acting precisely as the topers of Jerusalem did. Sometimes boys rebel against their mother, and scold because they are spoken to so many times. They say, "Why, mother, you have told me that twenty times. Do not tell it to me any more. You are always harping on the same old string. Why don't you tell me something new?" And occasionally if a boy is very drunk he will even go so far as to mimic his parents. He will say behind their backs: "Tsav la tsav, tsav la tsav; qav la qav, qav la qav; z'eir sham, z'eir sham." Of course he does not speak in Hebrew. He speaks in English. The words of the

Hebrew drunkards when translated into New York English mean simply this: "Bah, bah, bah, bah, go away!"

Why is it that your parents tell you the same thing so many times? It is because they are ordained servants of the Lord. Your father is a prophet, and your mother is a prophetess, and their chief business in the world is to teach to you the law of God. In the Book of Deuteronomy we are told that God instructed Moses to tell all the fathers and mothers among the Hebrews to teach his laws diligently unto their children, and to talk of them when they sat down in the house, and when they walked by the way, and when they lay down, and when they got up. Fathers and mothers were commanded to bind God's laws upon their hands, and to stamp them across their foreheads, and to write them upon the posts of their houses and upon their gates.

Parents were thus commanded to keep God's law before the eyes of their children all the time. If fathers and mothers do not do this, they are committing the greatest sin which it is possible for parents to be guilty of. They tell you the same things over and over again because God has commanded them to do it.

Moreover, it is necessary for them to say the same things many times in order to get these things into your mind and heart. It takes a deal of repetition to get a big idea into a small boy's soul. Did you ever see a pile driver driving piles? The pile driver shoots up into the air a great mass of iron, and without a moment's warning lets it drop upon the head of the pile. The pile does not mind the first blow very much, and stands almost as proud and tall as ever. But the pile driver keeps right on at its work. It lifts the iron into the air and

lets it drop five times, ten times, fifty times, perhaps a hundred times, and by and by the pile is driven down deep into the river bed, and is so firm and safe that men are not afraid to make it part of the foundation of a house. Fathers and mothers must drive principles into their children's hearts because these principles are the piles upon which the house of character must be erected. If the piles are not deep and solid the house in later years will come tumbling down. It is for your eternal good that precept is placed upon precept, and line is placed upon line.

A man who cuts a sentence upon a block of marble spends many hours in doing it. He taps his chisel with his mallet time after time, holding the chisel point, so it seems, in almost precisely the same place, and for good reason. No one can chisel words beautifully with a single blow. The more

beautifully the work is done the larger must be the number of strokes, and the longer must be the time expended. Not only does the marble cutter want to make the words beautiful, but he wants to cut them so that the storms of winter will not rub them out. He must cut these words so deep that they will last long after the marble cutter is in his grave. Fathers and mothers must cut upon their children's hearts the words of God's eternal law. It is the most beautiful work which anyone can do, and it cannot be accomplished without much patience and long continued labor. The heart is harder than any marble, and in order that words may last after the human body has been worn out and cast away, it is necessary for fathers and mothers in the training of their children to hit the heart repeatedly day after day, week after week, month after month, through many a year. In this way

they are able to do work which will outlast the stars.

When a stone mason wants to break a large stone in two, he lifts up his sledge hammer and strikes the stone. The stone in many instances pays no attention to the blow, but lies sullen and stubborn, looking at the mason in a way which says, "You can't break me!" The mason strikes the stone again, and still the stone remains unbroken. He strikes it three times, four times, but not until the hammer descends for the ninth time does the stone submit and break in two. Which of the nine blows broke the stone? Certainly not the first or the second or the third, nor was it the seventh or the eighth or the ninth. It was all the nine blows combined which accomplished the work.

Bad habits like stones are broken by repeated blows. Every one of you has a bad

habit. If you do not know what your bad habit is, ask your mother and she will tell you. These bad habits must be broken. The only way to break them is to strike them again and again and again. You must strike them and you must strike them hard, and in this work your parents must assist you. The only reason that they keep striking your bad habits is because they wish to set you free.

Your father and mother do not tell you many different things because there are not many different things to tell. There are only a few letters in the alphabet. And after you have learned them all there are no more letters to be learned. When once you have mastered the twenty-six letters, you can read the largest English book ever published. Even in the Bible there are only twenty-six letters. There are only a few kinds of figures,—just as many as you have

fingers on both your hands. After you have learned these ten there are no more to learn. You cannot find in any arithmetic a figure different from those ten which you learned when you first went to school. There are only a few tones in music. Even the finest voice cannot produce many tones. After one has mastered these few tones he can sing any song that was ever written. There are only a few laws of life, but these few laws are all important. If you learn these laws and learn them thoroughly, your life will be blessed all your days. Your parents harp on a few strings because out of these few strings all the music of your life is going to come.

It was not pleasant for Isaiah to warn the drunkards in Jerusalem when he knew that the drunkards did not care to listen to what he said. But Isaiah knew that it was his duty to warn these men because he saw

things which were hidden from their eyes. To see anyone in danger and not give that person a word of warning is a fearful sin. Boys and girls are in great danger, and that is why fathers and mothers must speak so many times. Young people cannot see very far. A boy at five cannot see five years ahead of him. A boy at fifteen cannot see his twentieth birthday. No one of us can see one step beyond the point in life up to which we have lived, unless we use the knowledge which has been gained by those who have lived beyond us. No one knows the enemies that lurk in ambush by the way except those who have traveled along that road. Fathers and mothers have traveled long distances through life, and they know a thousand things which their children cannot know. It is because they see the pitfalls and the temptations and the awful dangers, that they keep saying to you: "Do this,

and don't do that." They do not want you to be captured and broken and ruined.

The teaching of your parents may seem to be monotonous, but it is not so monotonous as the teaching which you will receive by and by if you do not heed your parents' words. If you do not like the monotony of advice you will like still less the monotony of punishment. In youth you are offered the "Tsav la tsav, tsav la tsav; qav la qav, qav la qav;" from the best friends which you will ever have, your father and mother. But if you do not receive what they try to give you, then, later on, your enemy will speak to you a "Tsav la tsav, tsav la tsav;" which will make you wince and groan. For if you do not obey God's laws, if you are not good children of your Heavenly Father, your accusing conscience will some day cry out in a terrible monotone: "Tsav la tsav, tsav la tsav." You will have pain upon

pain, loss upon loss, woe upon woe, and will fall at last into the very ruin from which your parents tried to save you. Listen, then, to the exhortation of St. Paul: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." "Honor your father and mother, that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth."

II

HOW TO GROW

"And the child grew." LUKE 2: 40.

Preached Sunday Morning
May 12, 1901

HOW TO GROW

THAT is the first thing which the New Testament says Jesus ever did. It is the only thing which the New Testament says Jesus did in the first twelve years of his life. Across the pages of twelve great years St. Luke writes that simple sentence, "And the child grew." At the age of twelve Jesus comes before us and speaks. He speaks but once and then like a meteor disappears. We do not see or hear Him for eighteen long years. Across these years of silence St. Luke writes the words, "He increased in wisdom and in stature," that is, "He kept right on growing." The chief fact, then, in the life of Jesus up to his thirtieth birthday is the fact that He grew. Since the New Testament has writ-

ten that fact so large and has made it stand out all alone so that we should be sure to see it, we ought to ask what it means and find out what it teaches.

For what Jesus did we must do. To be a Christian is to be a follower of Him. He is the ideal man, and what He did all men must do. He is the ideal child and what He did all children ought to do. If we are to follow Him, we ought to begin in childhood, and the starting point of all discipleship is stated in these four short words: "And the child grew."

That was the chief thing which the boy Jesus did. If He had not grown He could not have done later on His mighty deeds, nor spoken His wonderful words. He grew so fast that when He went to Jerusalem, at the age of twelve, the big learned city doctors wondered at Him, and by the time He was thirty He had grown so far

beyond all the other boys of His town that men and women looked at Him in amazement, not knowing what to think or say. In those thirty years He had grown to be so strong and brave and wise and good that He still overtops all the men who have ever lived, and when anybody says, "Behold the man!" we look up and see no man, but Jesus only. We should have no New Testament, no Christian hymns, no Christian church, if Jesus had not grown.

The chief thing for every boy and girl to do is to grow. The world does not want boys and girls to work. Grown folks can do the work. Houses must be built, and furniture manufactured, and streets paved, and cars run, and business carried on, but we do not want boys to do these things. Boys have nothing to do but grow. Dresses must be made, and dinners cooked, and scrubbing done, but we do not want girls to do it.

HOW TO GROW

Girls have nothing to do but grow. The world is very particular on this point. It says: "Now do not disturb those children. They are busy with their growing. Do not ask them to do any work, for they must have a chance to grow!" And so the men and women do all the work. They work to get money to buy bread and meat, and hats and clothes and boots, and books and toys. They keep the boys and girls supplied with everything they need, and they do all this that every boy and girl may grow.

Now, children must grow all over. Every human being is made up of two pieces. One piece you can see, that is the body; the other piece you cannot see, that is the mind. You can see a boy's eyes, but not his memory. You can see his ears, but not his imagination. You can see his nose, but not his will. Eyes and ears are organs of the body, memory and will are organs of the

mind, and all alike must grow. A child must grow both in body and in mind to make a complete man.

That is the way Jesus grew. St. Luke says: "He increased in wisdom and in stature." Stature means standing, or height. Jesus' body grew taller and taller. Once, when they measured Him, He was only two feet tall, but He soon added another inch and then another, and another, and another. The women in Nazareth used to say to Mary, "How that boy of yours is growing!" And I know that Mary felt very proud, for mothers are always glad to have their children grow.

But the inward growth of Jesus was more wonderful than that of His body. His mind grew wider and deeper and higher. His disposition became sweeter and richer and gentler. His spirit waxed loftier and nobler and mightier, until He at last be-

came great enough to say, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He took this world in His arms. I have often wondered how Mary felt when she saw her boy growing. How pleased and delighted she must have been to see His mind unfold, to watch His affections expand, to note new graces bursting into blossom. I think she must have been the happiest woman in all Galilee, for nothing makes a mother's heart so happy as to see her children grow; not simply in body, but in goodness and in all beautiful dispositions Jesus grew to be so true and wise and noble that Mary almost worshiped him. Before the world knew anything about Him she knew how wonderful He was. You can see what confidence she had in Him from what she said to some men at the marriage feast in Cana: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." She never

would have said that had he not been a good boy.

Now, a child may grow in one part of his nature and not grow in the other. Sometimes children are born with a disease that will not let them grow. Their body reaches a certain point and then stops. The parents coax it with all kinds of food, and the doctors coddle it with all kinds of remedies, but not all the king's horses, nor all the king's men can tempt the little body to grow any more. It is a terrible disappointment for parents to have a child whose body will not grow. It makes them sad. When a mother says, "The baby is not growing. He has not grown a bit for a long time," she says it with great sorrow in her voice, for she knows that in all probability the baby is going to die. Children are made to grow, and if they do not grow they cannot live. Or if they do live they are not like other

people. They are known as dwarfs or pygmies. Poor little things, they are sometimes carried over the country, along with chimpanzees and baboons and other queer creatures, so that people can see them. It is an awful misfortune to have a body which will not grow. If your body is growing you ought to be thankful every day you live, and tell God how glad you are He has given you a body which grows. The very best thing a body can do is to grow.

But sometimes the body grows and the soul remains a dwarf. After the mind has reached a certain point it may refuse to grow and want to stay where it is. Big men and women sometimes have very small minds. They may be six feet tall and weigh ever so many pounds, and still have a little bit of a soul. Their aims may be low, and their ambitions little, and their sympathies narrow, and their affections stunted, and

their ideas puny. They are mental dwarfs. Everybody who comes near them knows they are small. Their conversation is thin, their dealings are petty. They are cross and crabbed, and unreasonable and ugly, and very hard to get along with. They are hard to live with because they are so small. We sometimes call such people childish, and I have heard them called big babies. A little baby a few months old is the sweetest thing in all the world, but a big baby is one of the most terrible of all living creatures. We want to get away from that sort of baby as far as we can. Jesus' life was made miserable by big babies. There were a lot of them in Nazareth. They had big bodies, but little minds. They wanted to kill Jesus simply because He had said something they did not agree with. There were other babies in Capernaum. They would make a great fuss over an ox which had

fallen, but paid no attention to a fallen man. Jerusalem was filled with these babies. They dipped their fingers in water twenty times every day in order to show God how clean they were, but they never took the trouble to drive dirty thoughts out of their minds. What babies they were! I do not wonder that Jesus looked at them with astonishment and sorrow.

It is an awful thing, boys and girls, to build up your body, and let your soul remain a pigmy. What a tragedy! It is suicide. When the soul is created to grow into the image of God, what a pity to crush it down into a miserable little runt! And what a shame and disgrace it is, for if the mind does not grow it is nearly always a person's own fault. When the body will not grow, one cannot help it. Tom Thumb was not to blame because his body was so small. But when the soul remains a dwarf it is usually

because of sin. Shame on you if you do not grow! I would rather have a body only two feet high, with a mind inside my little skull capable of thinking great thoughts and appreciating noble people and lovely music and pictures, and dreaming beautiful dreams, than be as huge as Goliath, with a little mind in my big skull no larger than the mind of a cat! Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords because He grew in wisdom as well as in stature. He grew both in body and in mind.

Some one may ask, "How can I grow?" Let me find you an answer in the Sermon on the Mount. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow." How do they grow? By working, or worrying, or struggling? No; simply by doing what God tells lilies to do. God wants lilies to keep themselves partly in the earth and partly in the sun, and when they do that, they become

more beautiful than the most gorgeous of all Oriental kings. In other words, all that a lily has to do is to eat. It must eat both the earth and the sky. It must reach down into the dark earth for mica and feldspar and lime, and it must look up for the sunbeam and rain. By eating day by day the food which God has placed within its reach, it becomes a miracle of beauty and a joy to all the world. No wonder Jesus said, "Look at the lilies!" Lilies and children are alike in one thing. Their chief business is to grow, and in order to grow they must eat.

Do you want to grow in body? Eat. Do not eat everything you fancy, or everything which boys and girls give you to eat, but eat what your father and mother know to be good. They know what your body needs. You do not know. God commands a lily to look to the earth and sun for its

food. God commands boys and girls to look to their parents for food. Suppose a lily should pout and say, "Old earth, you do not know what I need," and then toss its pretty head and say, "Old sun, I can get on without any help from you," what a foolish lily that would be. But there never was a foolish lily since the world was made. All the lilies have obeyed the command of God. They have looked constantly to the earth and sun, and God has given them a beauty whose praises have filled all the world. See how the lilies grow. They obey God,—do what God tells you to do. Look to your parents for your daily food and you will have a body more beautiful and wonderful than the body of a flower. If God so clothes the grass of the field which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O you precious boys and girls?

HOW TO GROW

Be careful how and what you eat. Your body is the house in which your soul must do its work. If you do not build it strong, it will soon wear out and come tumbling down in ruin. When the house falls down the soul is obliged to leave. A soul cannot live on this earth outside of a body, so that if your body falls, your soul must travel to some other world, and you can never do here what God wanted you to do. Build your body out of the very best materials your parents can supply.

But the mind, also, must have its food. The body eats out of the earth, the soul eats out of the sky. Your soul cannot possibly grow unless you feed it every day. That is the reason we send you to school. We want you to eat your lessons. Arithmetic and language and science are all foods for the mind. We buy you books in order that you may eat them. If you eat a bad book it

makes you scrawny and half sick, but if you eat a good book it will increase the muscles of your mind. The Bible is the best of all books. You ought to eat a piece of it every day. People that eat it regularly every day of their life increase in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man. The chief reason why you ought to come to church is in order that you may eat. By eating the hymns and the prayers and the sermon you will grow into strong and capable servants of God. You can never grow unless you eat.

Jesus was fond of growing things. In His teaching He never spoke of stars and rocks, but He was always talking about grass and flowers, and grain and trees. I wonder if this is the explanation. Stars and rocks do not grow, but flowers and trees do. There was nothing more interesting to Jesus than a seed. I am sure He was

interested in a seed simply because it grows. I imagine one of the reasons He was so fond of children is that children grow. They reminded him of the lilies of the field. He was very fond of them. His disciples tried to keep them away, but He said, "Let them come." The Pharisees tried to stop the singing of the children in the temple, but He said, "Let them sing." He took a child and set him in the midst of a company of grown folks one day and said: "Look, this child can teach you many lessons!" I am sure He did this because it is the nature of a child to grow. The only people in all Palestine who provoked Jesus beyond endurance were the people who did not want to grow. These people thought they had grown enough. They had done enough. They knew enough. They were good enough. They had reached their growth, and there was nothing more to do but look

down with contempt upon their neighbors who had not grown so high as they had. Jesus could do nothing with such people. He cannot do anything with anybody who does not want to grow.

Nor can He help anybody grow who will not eat. Growth depends almost entirely on eating. He was always talking to people about eating. One day He said to a great crowd of men: "You must eat My flesh and drink My blood, or you can have no life in you." That was His way of saying, "You must eat My ideas, My feelings, My aims, My spirit, or you are not really alive. Unless you eat Me—build My life into your life—you cannot grow into what God wants all men to be." And on the last night which He ever spent upon our earth He came back to this old problem of eating. One of the last things He said to His disciples was, "Eat, eat My body. Drink,

drink My blood." Did you ever wonder why we have something which we call a "supper" on every Communion Sunday? Jesus told us to have this supper because He wants us to remind ourselves again and again that God demands nothing so much as He demands growth, and that it is impossible for us to grow without eating. We must feed constantly on Him.

Jesus learned this by His own experience. He grew by eating. He could not have grown in any other way. All through His boyhood He had eaten the scriptures and gotten them thoroughly into His blood. He had drunk His mother's prayers. He had eaten the Psalms in the synagogue. He had eaten the sacrifices in the temple. He had listened to what God had said in the silences of His life, and He had obeyed Him always. That is why He could say: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every

word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." How did He know that? He had tried it. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me; I do always those things which are pleasing unto Him." What was the result? He grew like a lily. Indeed, men love to call Him the lily of the valley, the fairest of ten thousand, the one altogether lovely. Simply by doing what God wanted him to do, by eating every day the food which His Heavenly Father bountifully supplied, he grew into a lovely flower whose perfume has filled all the world, into a mighty King of whose government there shall be no end.

"And the child grew." That is what we want you all to do. We do not want you to work. We do not ask you to be men and women just yet. We do not want you to think or speak or act like grown folks. We want you to be children, that is, we want

you to grow. We are interested in your growth, and so, also, is God. Did you ever wonder why your body grows so slowly? A colt grows faster than a boy, a calf grows faster than a girl, but that is because colt and calf are animals and you are immortal beings. God holds your body back in order that your mind may have a chance to grow. Wonderful changes are taking place in your brain. God is perfecting a wonderful instrument on which you are to play all the grand music of life. He keeps you a child as long as he can, in order that the foundation work inside of you may be completed. He wants you to increase in all beautiful affections. He wants you to abound in all lovely virtues and graces. He wants you to grow in the stature and glory of your spirit. He lengthens the years of youth because you are his children, and heirs of immortality. Things that grow

fast die soon. A flower grows rapidly and fades early. An oak grows slowly, but lives a century. Boys and girls grow slowly because they are children of the Highest, and, like him, are to live forever and ever.

Grow, then, both in body and in spirit. May it be the ambition of your life to grow. May you grow up into Him in all things who is the head of the church. May you grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

III

THE DUTY OF ASKING QUESTIONS

"Hearing them and asking them questions." LUKE 2:46.

Preached Sunday Morning
May 11, 1902

THE DUTY OF ASKING QUESTIONS

A YEAR ago I spoke to you about the secret of growth: let me talk to you this morning on the duty of asking questions.

Of course you have all asked questions. It is the habit of boys and girls. A boy who has a tongue is sure to ask questions not a few, and if he had no tongue he would ask questions with his eyes or face or fingers. A child would not be a child if it never asked a question.

But I wonder how many of you have ever looked upon the work of asking questions as your business. Indeed it is the only business which you have. The boys are not old enough to be mechanics, merchants or lawyers, and the girls are too young to be

trained nurses, dressmakers or housekeepers. You cannot enter just now any of the businesses which belong to grown people, but you have a business of your own, and that is the business of asking questions.

This business has been given to you by God. You are never so well employed as you are when you are asking questions. Jesus, you remember, one day went to Jerusalem to attend a religious festival with his father and mother. It was a great day in his life. When the time arrived to return home the boy Jesus was not ready to go. He was not able to walk all the way from Jerusalem to Nazareth because he carried on his mind such a bundle of unanswered questions. And so instead of turning his face toward Nazareth he lingered behind in the temple. His parents started off without him and did not notice his disappearance for several hours. Returning to

the city they looked for him here and there but did not find him. At last on the third day they found him among the Doctors in the temple hearing them and asking them questions. When his mother asked him why he had stayed behind, his reply was: "Wist ye not that I must be about my father's business?" Now Jesus was the ideal boy of all the world. If for him to ask questions was to be about his father's business, you may be quite sure that in asking questions you are doing what your Heavenly Father would have you do.

Because Jesus asked questions he grew. The mind grows by feeding on the material which questions gather and bring in. He waxed strong in spirit. The soul that comes in contact with other souls in an effort to obtain their treasures, is certain to increase in strength. He became filled with wisdom, so full he was that he became

the wonder of the town. When he had passed his thirtieth birthday he spoke one day in the synagogue in Nazareth. The people listened to him in astonishment. "Whence hath this man this wisdom," they said to one another, and then went on to ask, "Is not this the carpenter's son?"—just as much as to say, a boy brought up in a carpenter's shop cannot know enough to talk in church! Poor, mistaken people, they did not know that a boy can learn anywhere, in a shop, on a farm, in a coal mine, on the streets selling papers or blacking boots, provided only that he is willing to listen and ask questions.

In developing this faculty for asking questions Jesus fitted himself for his future work. He became the expert question-asker of all time. He never could have succeeded as he did, had he not had a genius for asking questions. It was his custom to

draw people to him by asking them a question. When he heard the footsteps of two bashful young men behind him walking along the river bank, he broke the ice and made it easy for them to speak to him by asking, "What seek ye?" One day, while on his way through Samaria, he sat down on the curbing of Jacob's well, and while resting there a poor, degraded woman came to draw a jug of water. She was separated from him by thick, high walls of ignorance and prejudice, but he pushed the walls all over with a gentle question, "Will you please give me a drink of water?"

On one occasion he was passing through a crowded street, and suddenly he exclaimed, "Who touched me?" He asked the question to encourage a timid-hearted woman who had reached forth her finger to touch his garment in the throng. He drew his own disciples ever closer to him by

affectionate inquiries. "Whom say ye that I am?" "Are ye able to drink of this cup?" It was in this way that he secured confessions from his chosen friends, which held them as with hoops of steel.

And then he educated men, and developed in them new life by pricking them with questions. "What think ye?"—that was one of his favorite interrogations. With Jesus standing before a man with such a question on his lips the man was compelled to think. Another favorite question was, "Have ye not read?" If they had not read before they certainly would begin to read forthwith. If he found people weak and hopeless and nearly dead, he was almost certain to pierce them with some such question as, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" Our Lord taught men how to live by asking them questions.

Time and again he protected himself

from his enemies by means of questions. He was always in a lion's den and the only club which it was possible for him to use was a question. The Pharisees and Sadducees and Scribes and other big folks in Jerusalem did not like him, and they used to stand round him like so many hyenas, licking their jaws, and eager to eat him up; but when he wanted to make them run, all that he had to do was to say, "Let me ask you one question." One question was enough to rout the whole of them.

One day all his enemies got together in a corner and framed a lot of questions which they felt certain would bring him to destruction. Jesus listened to them and answered them one after another, and then proceeded to ask some questions of his own. The result was that when evening came he was complete master of the field. This is the way St. Matthew relates the result of

the battle:—"No man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions." Why not? Because they were afraid he would ask them another question.

It was with questions that Jesus punished people when they did what it was not right for them to do. He could hold men back sometimes from doing wrong simply by asking a question. One day his disciples were on the point of running away. Everybody else had gone, and they all looked so sad and frightened that Jesus supposed they were going too. And so he said, "Would ye also go away?" Right in their midst he reared that personal question, and what could they do? Simon Peter felt so ashamed that he replied with great earnestness: "No, indeed!" I do not know what Peter might have done had not Jesus asked him that question.

DUTY OF ASKING QUESTIONS

On the night of his betrayal Jesus took three of his disciples into the Garden of Gethsemane and asked them to watch while he went away deeper into the garden to pray. When he returned he found them all sleeping and this was their punishment, "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" That went through them like a dagger. It brought the blood. One reason why they ran away as soon as they got outside of the gate was that they were so ashamed of not having been able to keep awake even one hour. But the most terrible question which Jesus ever asked was the one he asked Judas when the traitor stepped out to betray him. "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" O how that question hurt! It drove Judas to suicide. He could not live with that question sticking in him.

And, boys and girls, do you know that I am afraid of Jesus' questions? Suppose he

says to me when I meet him on the other side, "Did you do all you could for me while you were the Pastor of Broadway Tabernacle in New York City?" What shall I say? And what will *you* say when you meet him by and by, if he asks you, "Did you do all you could for me while you were living on the earth?"

The questions which Jesus asked 2000 years ago are living still. They vibrate in the atmosphere and we have no broom to sweep them away. They are in the fiber of the mind, sticking there like so many burrs, and we cannot shake them out. "Is not a man better than a sheep?" That will sound in the world's ear forever. Let me tell you something which always makes me think of Jesus' question. Whenever a horse falls in one of our streets several men rush at once to its assistance. It is beautiful to see them run. No matter how great a hurry

they are in, they will stop because a horse is down. They will clamber down out of their big wagons and leave their teams standing in the street in order to get the horse of a brother driver on his feet. One man strokes the poor horse's nose and speaks encouragingly to it, another unbuckles the harness, others push back the wagon in order that the unfortunate animal may have a chance, and by means of all this help the horse, unless a leg is broken, struggles to his feet again and the crowd goes on its way rejoicing.

But I have seen a man fall in the street, not because the pavement was slippery, but because the man had put an enemy into his mouth to steal away his brains. And when he fell I have seen boys laugh, and grown-up men pass by on the other side with a look of scorn; and it is at such a time as this that I think of Jesus' words: "Is not a

man better than an animal?" There are other questions which still haunt the world. "Ten were cleansed, and where are the nine?" One is reminded of that question every time the church invites men to thank God for his goodness and his wonderful works to us all. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" That is a question from which we cannot get away. Only this last week I suspect that more than one man in the fever and strain of New York life said to himself: "What shall it profit a man?"

The point of all this is that Jesus is the supreme question-asker of the world, and that he would never have been so wise a man, had he not mastered the art of asking questions when a boy.

The world progresses just as men are willing to ask questions. The golden ages

were all made golden by minds which had questions in them and the dark ages have been rendered dark by minds which had no desire to know. The world has made more material progress within the last century than it made during the preceding 5000 years, and all because the men of the last century have been such experts in asking questions. When Jesus said, "Except ye become as little children ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven," he meant that men must ask questions if they wish to advance; but it was not till 1600 years later that an Englishman by the name of Bacon caught the meaning of Jesus' words. The scientists had always worked out their theories and expected Nature to obey them. Bacon saw that if men were ever to enter the kingdom of science they must listen to Nature and ask her questions.

That is what science has been doing for

the last 300 years, and that is the secret of her marvelous victories. The astronomers used to draw maps of the sky and frame theories as to how the stars ought to behave. So long as they did this astronomy made slight progress. By and by astronomers began to listen to the heavens and to ask them questions. One man said: "O Sun, where do you get your heat?" Another one said: "O Moon, why do you fall away from your orbit?" Another one asked: "O Jupiter, what cuts off your light?" Still another said: "O Uranus, why do you waver and lose so much time?" As soon as men began to ask questions, the heavens began to rain down answers. The result is modern astronomy.

The attitude of the scientist of to-day is illustrated by Galileo. When a young man of nineteen he went one day into the Cathedral of Pisa and saw that the big

bronze lamp suspended from the lofty ceiling was slowly swinging. No one else had noticed that fact all that day. Galileo sat down and watched the lamp. He asked it questions, and the lamp, pleased to be thus noticed, courteously replied. The answers of that bronze lamp have been published in all the text books of all civilized lands, and before Galileo died he built one of the answers into an astronomical clock. The universe is filled with swinging lamps, and all that the scientists have to do is to look and listen, and ask questions.

An interrogation point lies at the beginning of the age of modern invention. Men were never able to invent anything until they began to ask questions. Take this one illustration. Years ago, in a little town in Scotland, there lived a boy whose mother called him Jimmy Watt. Jimmy was a delicate child and he could not romp and

run like other boys, but he was strong enough to ask questions. He was in the habit of lying on the floor in front of the fire and listening to the teakettle sing. One day he noticed that the steam played queer capers with the teakettle lid, and he began to ask the kettle a string of questions. The kettle began it and Jimmy ended it. What the kettle told the boy was afterward built into a steam engine, and what all is yet to come out of that teakettle it is impossible to say. The steam engine brought the railroad, the railroad brought the factory, the factory built the city, and the city has given us what we call civilization—all this has flowed out of a question asked by a little sickly boy.

Therefore, boys and girls, never hesitate to ask questions. Cultivate the art of doing it and begin at once.

Question your parents. God has or-

dained them for the work of answering the questions which you may ask. But let me give you two bits of advice. Always listen before you ask. That is the order which Jesus followed. He did not ask the Doctors questions until he had heard what they had to say. It is foolish to ask questions before one has listened. Many a boy would ask fewer questions and the questions asked would be wiser than they are, if he would first pay attention to what is being said. If you draw your questions out of your own ignorance they are almost certain to be useless, whereas if you draw them from the things which have been told you by your parents or your teachers they are almost certain to be sensible and wholesome.

Do not expect an answer to all your questions before sunset. Any child can ask questions which no one can answer, and every child often asks questions which

ought not to be answered at once. Do not expect answers to all your questions immediately. It would be no fun to live if all your questions could be answered in a minute. Some of them will be answered tomorrow, and some the day after, and others still later. In asking questions you must learn to wait.

Question your teachers. That is what they are for. Carry your perplexities to your Sunday School teacher, and to your day school teacher, and to your pulpit teacher. I am always glad to answer boys and girls. When I was young I asked a lot of questions, and the answers to many of them are tucked away in the pigeon holes of my mind. You may have some of these answers if you ask for them.

There are two great books which you ought to question every day. One of these is the Bible. You ought never to read a

page of the big book without asking some such question as why, where, when, how, or of what value is this to me? The Bible is full of wisdom, but you cannot get it unless you ask questions.

The other book which ought to be quizzed every day is the Dictionary. A dictionary ought to lie at the center of every home, and boys and girls ought to go to it more frequently than to the dinner table. Whenever you meet a word walking up and down the avenues of public speech to which you have not been introduced, just take it by the throat and lead it to the dictionary that you may see just who and what it is. Downtown there is a room known as the "Rogues' Gallery." In that room are preserved the photographs of a host of bad men and bad women, with a brief history of their lives. Whenever a criminal is caught the officers go to the Rogues' Gallery to find out

just who the culprit is and how many bad things he has been guilty of, in different sections of the land.

Now a printed word is the photograph of a spoken word. A dictionary is a gallery filled with the photographs of words. The good are there and so also are the bad, and whenever you meet an unknown word it is your duty to take it at once to the dictionary that you may find out where the word came from, what it means, and what kind of work it has been doing in the world. If you will form at once the habit of consulting the dictionary every day, and carry the habit with you through the years, you will grow in strength and in wisdom all the time. It is a beautiful feature of a dictionary that it never loses its patience. You can question it all day long and it will be as gentle and good-natured at evening as it was in the morning. It can never be provoked. It

gives its answers without a frown. I cannot say so much of all parents and teachers.

Go to Nature with earnest questionings. Watch her closely and ask her the reasons for her actions. Never look at the sky or the ocean without throwing a question at it. Never walk through the woods and listen to the singing of birds or the hum of insects without allowing questions to form themselves in your mind. Nature loves to be questioned. She delights to give answers to those who most diligently inquire of her. If you will listen to her and then ask her questions she may be as kind to you as she was to Agassiz and sing to you "night and day the rhymes of the universe," and if ever the way seems long or your heart begins to fail "she will sing you a more wonderful song or tell you a more wonderful tale."

Carry your questions to God. Does he not say "Ask." If you ask for bread he

will surely not give you a stone. We owe a debt of gratitude to the disciples because they asked Jesus so many questions. Some of the most beautiful things in the Gospels were drawn from him by questions. I love Simon Peter because he was so inquisitive. Would that he had asked more questions than he did! Never hesitate to carry your questions to the Heavenly Father. He is interested in your problems and your difficulties and will give you all the light which it is best and possible for you to have. Of course he will not answer all your questions just now, but they will all be answered some day. Like our earthly parents he is obliged to postpone many of his answers until such times as we may be able to bear them. One of the joys of heaven will be getting answers to questions which we have asked him here on earth. But question him. Asking ques-

tions is a part of worship. Follow the example of the Psalmist, with whose words I bring my sermon to a close:

"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that I will seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to *inquire* in his temple."

IV

THE BEAUTY OF OBEDIENCE

"And was subject unto them."
LUKE 2: 51.

Preached Sunday Morning
May 10, 1903

THE BEAUTY OF OBEDIENCE

AND was subject unto them." That is the way it runs in our King James' Bible, but William Tyndale, who translated the Gospel of Luke eighty-five years before King James brought out his new Bible, wrote it thus—"He was obedient to them." Over two hundred years before Tyndale lived, John Wyclif had translated Luke's words, "and was subject to them" and the scholars of King James preferred to follow Wyclif rather than Tyndale, using subject instead of obedient, although both words mean almost the same thing.

To be obedient is to be subject, and to be subject is what? If you take hold of the word subject at both ends and pull hard you will pull it in two. In one hand you

will have a little word "sub," which everybody knows means under. New Yorkers call their tunnel "subway," because it runs under all the other ways on Manhattan Island. In the other hand you will have a piece of a Latin word which means to place or lay or throw or bring. So that when Luke says Jesus was subject to his parents, he means that Jesus laid himself under their authority and dominion and control.

Now if you should look for this sentence in the Greek Testament you would find in place of the word "subject" a large, plump word containing thirteen letters, and if you should ask me why so long a word in Greek is necessary when a short word is used in English, I should answer that the Greek word is large because it has more meaning in it than our little English word contains. The Greek word tells us that Jesus was *habitually* subject, he was subject right

along, all the time, without ceasing. His subjection was not spasmodic or intermittent or occasional, but it was a continuous and settled habit of his life. From day to day and from year to year he laid himself down under the dominion of his parents. Joseph is King, Mary is Queen, their home is a Kingdom and in this kingdom the boy Jesus is a subject.

He was subject. There is a lesson in the pronoun "He." Every boy thinks that he is a wonderful boy, and in thinking this every boy is right. God never made a boy who was not wonderful. And every boy thinks he is an exceptional boy, and this also is right, for no boy is like any other boy who ever was or ever will be. And every boy thinks he knows some things better than his parents, and here again the boy is not mistaken, for a boy knows things about his own thoughts and feelings and his companions

which his parents do not know. And because a boy is so wonderful and exceptional and knowing, he sometimes feels that it is beneath his dignity to lay himself down under the dominion of his parents' will. There are times, he thinks, when obedience ceases to be a virtue, and when he has a right to do as he wills or wishes. But this evidently is a mistake.

Jesus was a wonderful boy, and a boy quite exceptional, and he knew many things which his parents did not know. They did not even know that at the age of twelve he must be about his Father's business, and yet this wonderful boy with all his knowledge laid himself down beneath his parents' will. This is what the model boy does, and therefore if any other boy does something different he is not the kind of boy which God would have him be.

He was subject unto them. Mark the

pronoun "them," for it is easy to overlook it. The Bible is always particular whenever it speaks of children's duties to bring in both parents. It does this from the beginning. Is it not written in the Decalogue: "Honor thy father and thy mother"? When Moses laid down regulations for the government of the people this was one of the severest of his laws: "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, all the men of his city shall stone him with stones that he die."

When Paul writes to the children of Asia Minor he says, "Children obey your parents," and that letter "s" is one of the most important letters in the entire Bible. I have read of boys who evidently did not know the "s" is there. They made a distinction between their father and their

mother, placing the former on a higher pedestal than the latter. Their ears were attentive to their father's voice, but strange to say they could not hear their mother. They said to themselves—"She is nothing but a woman, and a woman is not to be obeyed." But all such boys are unlike the boy Jesus. Jesus made Joseph king and Mary queen, and he was subject to both of them. When they spoke he listened and when they commanded he obeyed.

And if a boy does not obey both his mother and his father there is something wrong with him. The model boy acted in no such manner and the boy who will not hearken to his mother is not the kind of boy which God would have him be. Indeed, I am inclined to think that Jesus' obedience to his mother was even swifter and more joyous than his obedience to his father, for I have no doubt that Jesus was

ever gallant, and that his heart was full of chivalry. To be chivalrous is to have high respect for woman.

In the middle ages the world was dark, and lawlessness abounded in many lands. There were bad and reckless men who had no regard for weakness, and because woman was defenceless she was often the victim of their strength. But the hearts of men were not wholly brutal, and there sprang up a company of heroes known as knights, sworn to protect and reverence woman. To do this it was necessary to dress in armor and carry a lance and other weapons, and again and again the knights were obliged to battle, in order that women might not be abused. So true and courageous were many of these knights that poets and novelists and historians have loved to write about them even to the present day.

Now every right-minded boy ought to be

a knight, and when barbarian boys speak disrespectfully of women, and refuse to obey their own mother, the boy with the chivalrous heart ought to stand up in her defense, and say with pride, "I am not ashamed to obey my mother, for to me she is the queen of all the women on the earth!" That is the way the boy Jesus acted toward his mother, and when he became a man his mother was so proud of him and had such boundless confidence in his goodness that she said to people wherever she went, "Whatsoever he saith unto you do it!" A boy who obeys his mother can be trusted when he is a man.

He went down with them. It was not an easy thing to do. It would have been far more pleasant to stay in Jerusalem. For Jerusalem was the capital of the Nation. It was filled with glorious things and interesting people. It had great

market places and famous pools and splendid palaces and the great temple built by Herod with its gold and marble and precious stones, with its candlesticks and altar and the holy of holies. And it was in Jerusalem that all the big people lived, the scholars and orators and rulers, the men whose very shadow was an inspiration.

And what was there in little Nazareth? Nazareth was only a tiny country town, very slow and very sleepy. There was nothing going on in Nazareth. There were no lovely buildings there. The little synagogue was no more like the Temple than a log cabin is like the White House. And nobody lived in Nazareth, no scholars, no soldiers, no rulers, no great merchants, no men whom it was worth one's while to know.

Yet Jesus went down from Jerusalem and came to Nazareth, and laid himself under

the dominion of a carpenter and his peasant wife. How much more delightful it would have been to hear wise men speaking in a marble temple, than to pick up shavings in a carpenter shop in cheap and prosy Nazareth. But Jesus was obedient, even when the paths of obedience were not pleasant.

I have known boys who have refused to come down from Jerusalem and go to Nazareth. They have seated themselves in the temple of their own stubborn will and when their father or mother has said "Come!" they have said "I won't!" They have settled themselves with a book, or they have plunged headlong into a game, or they have given themselves up to some thing which pleased them, and they have impudently refused to go to Nazareth. But no such children are like Jesus. I will tell you what they are like. They are like an animal. An animal never does anything it

does not want to do unless it is driven to it. An animal follows its own inclination. It takes the path which is easiest. Who ever heard of an animal doing of its own accord anything which was unpleasant or hard?

If you are like an animal you will never obey unless you are whipped into obedience. But if you want to be like the model boy you will obey no matter what it costs. You will never say, Is this pleasant? but, Is this right? Not, Do I want to do this? but, Ought I to do this? What difference does it make whether it is pleasant or not, or whether you want to do it or not? Do your father and mother want you to do it? If they do, then do it! If you are not willing to come down from the temple in Jerusalem to the shavings and sawdust of Nazareth, you are not the kind of boy which God would have every boy to be.

And behold the reward! St. Luke will

not close his chapter without telling us what it was. "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." He grew to be so strong a man that he has impressed all succeeding generations, and although nineteen hundred years have passed since he made his home in Palestine, all men everywhere are agreed that his was the most beautiful life ever yet lived upon this earth.

It was his obedience which made it beautiful. He used to say, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me," "I do always those things which are pleasing unto him," "Not my will but thine be done," and at the end of life he could say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." It was the obedience of Jesus which Paul thought was the climax of Jesus' life and the trait most worthy of being held up for our imitation. "Let this mind be in you

which was also in Christ Jesus, who became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!"

Of the virtues out of which a noble character is built, obedience is the first and most important. It is the corner-stone of the temple. According to the Bible the foremost of the virtues is obedience, and the first of all sins is disobedience. Disobedience is the nest in which all other sins are hatched; obedience is the root out of which all other virtues grow. "As through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of one shall the many be made righteous."

After the fall, the human race did not make a successful start toward God until the time of Abraham. "Abraham when he was called, *obeyed,* and he went out not knowing whither he went." The greatest of the patriarchs is immortal because of his

obedience. Moses, the greatest of the Law givers, was always saying to the people: "If you obey God you shall live, if you disobey him you shall die." Samuel, the greatest of the Judges, says to Saul, the first of the Kings: "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Isaiah, the greatest of the prophets, says: "If ye be obedient ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it."

Jesus, who is prophet, lawgiver, and judge combined, says to a young man who wants to know how to secure eternal life, "Keep the commandments." At the beginning of his public career Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you," and at the close he said, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." Everywhere and always he declared "He that wills to do God's will

shall know." That means that obedience comes first, and that men must obey in the dark.

Have you ever thought of the beauty of obedience? It is the most beautiful of all the virtues. If you do not believe this look at an army. What makes an army beautiful? Not the gold braid or the bright buttons or the glittering bayonets, but obedience. An army is organized on the principle of obedience. Every man must obey his superior and obey him instantly. If a man will not obey he is not a soldier, and must be drummed out of the regiment. A good soldier always obeys.

Many years ago an English ship called the *Birkenhead* was wrecked at sea. It was crowded with passengers, four hundred of them being British soldiers. There were boats sufficient only for the women and children, and there was nothing for the soldiers

to do but to die. Captain Wright ordered them on deck. Each man fell into his place without a murmur, and there they stood, silent and magnificent, until the ship heeled over and went down under them. I count that one of the most beautiful spectacles to be met with in the history of the world. Tennyson has given us another such picture in his "Charge of the Light Brigade."

"Forward, the Light Brigade!"
Was there a man dismay'd?
Not tho' the soldier knew
Some one had blundered;
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them

Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of Hell
Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell,
They that had fought so well
Came thro' the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of Hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wonder'd.
Honor the charge they made!
Honor the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred!

Why noble? Because they obeyed.

Anything so beautiful as obedience is valuable above rubies. Who can express the worth of it? It is the best gift which parents can possibly give to their children. It is a part of education, the most important part, and if a boy or girl does not learn the habit of obedience he or she is not educated, even though they may read many languages and be experts in science and mathematics. It is the best fortune which parents can bequeath to their children, and boys and girls who do not learn at home the virtue of obedience are unfortunate, even though their parents should give them a million dollars. For unless children learn obedience in the home, they are not likely to learn it anywhere, and a man or woman who is self-willed and incapable of obeying is never happy, and is often mischievous if not dangerous.

THE BEAUTY OF OBEDIENCE

No one makes a good citizen who does not obey the laws. What a lovely country this would be if all people were obedient: no jails, no prisons, no penitentiaries anywhere. And what a deal of misery and suffering we should be spared if all men and women in America had been taught when children to reverence laws and been trained to habits of obedience. Abhor above everybody else the man who disobeys the law! He is a traitor to his country and a man to be afraid of.

If a rich man breaks the law, and joins with other rich men in breaking it, and because he is rich and mighty sets the laws of his country at defiance, he ought to have his fine clothes stripped from his back, and he ought to be dressed in a striped suit, and they ought to put him in a prison and feed him on bread and water, and make him work hard every day, and keep him in

chains until he expressed a willingness to obey the laws. Never admire or praise or respect any man who tramples on the laws of his city, state, or nation.

And if a poor man breaks the law he too must be caught and punished. Justice must be measured out to rich and poor alike. And if the poor man joins with other poor men to trample on the rights of others and to destroy property and to take life, then he must be seized immediately and made to suffer for his heinous crime. There must be no delay, and no excuse-making in dealing with the criminal.

Men who trample on law, no matter who they are or what they want or how just their cause, are dangerous criminals, and must be made to pay the full penalty of their wicked deeds. Our flag is not a beautiful flag unless it floats over the heads of law-keeping men and women, and the very

foundations of our Republic are shaken when any class of men, high or low, defy their country's laws.

Nor can the Christian church be beautiful or strong unless its members are obedient. If they do, each one as he pleases, paying no attention to the rules which they have promised to obey, then they bring disgrace upon themselves and scandal on the church. Every good Christian lays himself down under the dominion of the laws of his church. Without obedience, a beautiful home, a strong government, and a church worthy of Jesus Christ are impossible.

What reward is offered to the obedient soul? Long life, joy, peace, power, God! It is the only thing for which the Bible offers a reward. It is the one thing which God everywhere expects and imperatively demands. The Bible offers us no reward for

our time or our strength or our money or our hymn singing or our church going or prayer saying, but it offers everything for the surrender of the will. There is no goodness without obedience. No matter what you think or feel or wish or hope or intend or resolve, you are displeasing to God unless you obey him. The one thing to seek, then, every day and always is an obedient heart.

How can we obey? We must practice obedience. We must take exercises in it. It is not enough to know that one ought to obey, he must put his knowledge into practice. He must work at it. It is no easy job. It is a harder problem than any of those you get at school. It cannot be solved in a week or a year. But God gives you time. He keeps you near your parents ten, fifteen, twenty years in order that this great habit of obedience may be thor-

oughly and forever established. But no matter how much time you have you never can learn obedience without help from above.

Saul of Tarsus was one of the strongest men who ever lived. He was a mental giant. But this is his confession: "The good which I would I do not; but the evil which I would not that I practice. O wretched man that I am who shall deliver me?" And in the midst of his weakness and defeat he found one strong to save, Jesus of Nazareth, God's only Son. He gave himself to Jesus unreservedly and with all his might, and doing this he was able to say, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." If you want to be obedient, pray to God to help you.

Give yourself to Jesus, the only perfectly obedient man our world has ever known. It is by following his example and drinking

in his spirit and relying on his promises that you will be able to master, little by little, with many a slip and failure, but with ever increasing confidence and success, the high and difficult art of obeying.

V

MY FATHER'S BUSINESS

"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" LUKE 2: 49.

Preached Sunday Morning
May 8, 1904

MY FATHER'S BUSINESS

JESUS has passed his twelfth birthday. He is no longer a boy. He is a man.

Not a grown man, but nevertheless a man; a young man, or as we would say, a youth. He can now do things he has never done before. He can wear phylacteries, little leathern cases containing scrolls written over with texts of Scripture. He is now a son of the commandment, a son of the law. He is a member of the congregation and must attend the services and observe the fasts. It is time now to begin the learning of a trade. He can also begin the study of the Talmud, a big book into which little boys are not allowed to look.

But best of all he can go to Jerusalem to attend the three great national feasts. And so now he is going to the Passover. He has

never been in Jerusalem since he was a baby. For years he has wanted to go, and now he is going. Jerusalem is the greatest city in all Palestine, to a Jewish boy as big as New York and Boston and Philadelphia and Chicago and Washington City all combined. Everything big is in Jerusalem, the big palaces and the big stores and the big markets and the big men, and best of all the great temple toward which all the good people in Galilee turn their faces when they say their prayers. Jesus has never yet seen the city, because it is so far away. It is eighty miles from Nazareth, three long days' journey, farther from Nazareth in time than Denver is from New York City. The time has come for Jesus to travel this immense distance to the City of King David.

What a trip it was! It was the month of April and all Palestine was abloom.

The birds were singing and the air was heavy with the fragrance of the flowers which everywhere greeted the eye with colors more gorgeous than those in the robes of Solomon the Magnificent. All the roads were filled with people, some riding and many walking, and the numbers constantly increased as the caravan approached the city. Bands of men and women, young and old, came out from every city, town and hamlet, until the roads were choked and packed, and it seemed that all the world was flowing toward Mount Zion. And as the people marched they sang favorite stanzas from the Psalms. Listen and you will hear a company in the valley singing: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." And now from some hill-top there float down the words: "I was glad

when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord! Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." And now across the scented fields there comes the music of this glad refrain: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." So they marched and so they sang, all the way to the city.

What a city it was—a thousand times larger than little Nazareth. When the city burst upon the eyes of Jesus he must have repeated the poet's words:

"Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, the city of the great king!"

I will not describe the city nor attempt to tell you how Jesus felt when he looked upon the temple, with its terraces of snowy marble and its gilded pinnacles and domes. Before he knew it, the time had come to return to Nazareth. The feast of the Passover

lasted a week, but attendance was obligatory only on the first two days, and many pilgrims started homeward at the end of that time. Joseph and Mary and a large number of Galileans probably started north on the morning of the third day. They supposed that Jesus was with the other boys; indeed, I suspect that some good neighbor assured Mary that Jesus was there, and that she had seen him with her own eyes, and it was not until night that it was discovered that Jesus was missing.

A search was made for him among his relatives, and then among the Nazareth neighbors, but the boy was not to be found. It was with a heavy heart that Mary lay down to try to sleep. She did not sleep much, I think, for she thought of a thousand things, as mothers will, and one of the things she thought about was no doubt the experience she had had with Herod years before,

when the crafty king had attempted to take her baby's life. Herod is dead, but is there another Herod in Jerusalem who has stolen her boy and possibly put him to death? It was a long, long night, and as soon as morning came Joseph and Mary started back to Jerusalem. The way seemed ten times farther than it had seemed the day before, for a sad heart increases distances amazingly.

Late in the afternoon they reached the city and began to inquire at the doors of all the people whom they knew for information concerning the boy who had disappeared. No one had seen him. They wandered through the crowded streets eagerly scanning every face, but the one beautiful face for which they looked was nowhere to be seen. It was now dark, and through the dreary night Mary waited for the morning. The bazaars were early visited, and many a

booth and stall was eagerly inspected, but all in vain.

Next they went to the temple, but he was not in any of its splendid courts. About to give up in despair, Mary entered a chamber adjoining one of the temple courts, a sort of schoolroom in which Bible teachers were wont to meet for the study of the Scriptures. The greatest Doctors in the land were in the habit of meeting here, and Mary timidly glanced round the room. And lo, there on the polished mosaic floor, in the very midst of the Masters of Israel, Jesus sat. The artist Hofmann has painted Jesus standing. Luke has it right: He was seated. He was not teaching the Rabbis, but being taught by them. He sat at their feet and listened. He listened so intently that the teachers were delighted.

Nothing so delights a teacher as the attention of a pupil. Now and then a hot ques-

tion would rise to his lips. The old men made reply and then proceeded to question him. His answers were so good they were all astonished. Jesus had studied the Prophets and the Psalms and had done a deal of thinking, and his questions were so keen and his answers were so wise that the Masters of the law were all amazed. Just then Mary caught his eye. Calling him aside, she said, "My boy, why have you acted in this way? Your father and I have looked for you everywhere, O so anxious." To which Jesus replied: "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"

It was a great day for surprises. The Rabbis were surprised at Jesus' wisdom, the parents were surprised that Jesus should leave them, the boy was surprised that his parents should not know just where to find him. He was no idle, curious sightseer,

even though he was only a country boy for the first time in a city. He was not interested in the marble of the palaces, or the uniform of the soldiers of the garrison of Antonia. He was no bargain seeker, looking for pretty things in the tempting booths and stalls.

Jerusalem was indeed magnificent, quite different from little Nazareth with its cottages of mud and its dull carpenter shop and its dingy synagogue, but he could not be taken captive by his eyes. The glitter of the gold and the sparkle of the gems and the gleam of the marble and the splendor of the robes could not hold him even for an hour. Even the temple worship, with its white robed priests and its stately ceremonials and its choirs of Levites and its orchestra of trained musicians, was not so attractive as a meeting for the study of the Bible. He was thirsty for knowledge. He

was hungry for truth, and so he turned away from sights which dazzled, to the doctors of the law. "Did you not know, mother, that this is the place for a boy like me, the only place I care to be? I am surprised that you looked for me any place else. Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"

These are the first recorded words of Jesus, and every syllable is precious. The poet Wordsworth says that the child is father of the man, and surely in these words of Jesus we get a hint of all that the man Jesus is ever to become. As in a mountain lake one sees reflected the mountains and the forests and the procession of the clouds, so in this single sentence of Jesus is mirrored the entire New Testament land and sky.

The very tone of his question is suggestive. He is surprised that those who know him do not expect to find him in the House

of God, engaged in the study of God's word. Where else, he asks, ought a boy of twelve to be, but at the feet of men who are expounders of the Scriptures? And every boy and girl who wishes to follow the example of Jesus should say to every tempter who tries to keep him away from the Bible School: "Don't you know that I must be about my Father's business?" A boy or girl is never in his place on Sunday morning unless he is in the Bible School. That any youth should be outside the school is of all things most surprising.

And, if it is the natural and normal thing for boys and girls to be about their Father's business, hearing his word and obeying his law, then all the way through life, wherever and whenever there is a right thing to be done which you are able to do, and a wrong thing to be struck which you are able to strike, and a battle to be fought against evil

in which you are able to engage, you ought to be found in your place; and that any human being should ever be found anywhere else is distressing and amazing. Voices will plead with you, calling you in other directions, but to all of these voices your answer should be, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

And mark that great word "*must.*" It was one of Jesus' earliest words, and he used it to the end. He was not ashamed to say that there were some things which he was obliged to do. Let no boy ever hesitate to say "I must." Many a man's life has been wrecked because he never learned, when a boy, to speak the words "I must." Jesus early learned the lesson, and so at thirty he could say, "I must preach the gospel." When men stood amazed at his tireless industry he said, "I must work the works of him that sent me while 'tis day."

When men urged him to save himself from his murderous foes he said: "I must go to Jerusalem, I must suffer many things, I must be lifted up." And this made Jesus strong. Nobody was able to turn him aside from the road which he felt that he must travel. No one could persuade him not to do a thing which he was convinced he ought to do. His dearest friends and even his brothers urged him to give up his plans, and his reply in substance was always this: "Don't you know that I must be about my Father's business?" Jesus was bound, and yet he was free.

Boys and girls, and for that matter grown folks too, sometimes have curious notions of liberty. To be free they think is to be able to do just what one pleases. But true freedom is the power to do what we ought to do. A dead leaf falling from a bough has power to do just what it pleases, because it is dead,

and no one cares how much it eddies or where it falls. But the big earth in traveling round the sun is very careful not to get outside her appointed path, for if she should wander even a little from the path which God has marked out she would upset all the life upon her surface. The earth is far freer than an autumn leaf. It gets its freedom from the sun. If we were only dead autumn leaves we could drift and eddy hither and thither and do anything we pleased; but being immortal souls, created in God's image, we have a mighty work to do and should keep the orbit which our Father's love has traced.

Jesus was the freest man who has ever lived upon our earth, and this is what he says to us every one and always: "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

"My Father." This was Jesus' name for

God. When he spoke to God he always called him "Father." When he was successful in his work, he said, "Father, I thank thee." When he was overcome with grief he cried, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass." When he pleaded for his disciples, he said, "Father, keep through thine own name these whom thou hast given me." On the cross he prayed, "Father, forgive them," and with his last breath he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." This is the word he wanted all men to use.

When you pray, say, "Father." When you are worried, remember that God is your Father. When you ask God for blessings, remember how willing parents are to give good things to their children. And because everything belongs to God, Jesus treated everything with reverence. He would not allow men to swear by heaven or the earth

or Jerusalem or their own head, for all these belonged to his Heavenly Father. He drove the traders from the temple because they were desecrating the temple of his Father. He cheered the hearts of his disciples by reminding them that the house of many mansions belongs to the Heavenly Father. All people were dear to Jesus because all of them were the children of God. Beggars and lepers and blind men and bad men, the most loathsome and forsaken of men were dear to his heart because they belonged to his Father in heaven. To be worthy of his Father was his constant ambition and unfailing delight. "My meat," he said, "is to do his will and to finish his work."

When only twelve Jesus had grasped the great idea that life must be lived for a purpose. There is business to do and the business belongs to God. In the temple Jesus

forgets all about himself. Some boys study because they are compelled to, or because they want to make a show, or because they expect to use their education in making money later on, but Jesus listened to his teachers and pondered the lessons which they set him in order to advance the glory of his Father. All kinds of work take on new luster when we think of it as being given to us by our Father. Men sometimes say, "My business," "my studies," "my plans," forgetting that God has anything to do with them. Everything we do, if we do it rightly, is our Father's business. It is ours and it is also his. Our life is ours and his, so also is our work. We are interested in our tasks, and so is he. We bend over our studies, and so does he. Everything that touches us also touches him, and that boys and girls should obey their parents and pay attention to their teachers is not only their

business, but it is also the business of the Heavenly Father.

Begin to-day, if you have not begun before, to live and work for God. That is something you cannot begin too early. Whatever you do at home or in school, at work or in play, do for his glory. Use your life as a gift given you for a high and holy purpose, and remembering that you are engaged in your Father's business you will never be overcome. Like the Master you will often say, "I must," and like him, when you are urged to turn aside, you will say, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished," Like him you will drink the cup which the Father gives you to drink, and like him you will be able to exclaim with a voice of triumph, when life has reached its close, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

VI

THE SILENT YEARS

"And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man." LUKE 2: 52.

Preached Sunday Morning
May 14, 1905

THE SILENT YEARS

I WANT to think with you about the silent years of Jesus. By "silent years" is usually meant the period between the day on which Jesus was found in the temple, and the day on which he appeared at the river Jordan to be baptized by the prophet John. Through all this stretch of eighteen years we do not catch a glimpse of Jesus or hear a syllable from his lips. We listen, but there is not the suggestion of a rustle. We shout our questions, but the silence sends back no echo. This period is a sort of Sahara desert with not one oasis in it at which the weary Bible student can pause and quench his thirst. From the age of twelve to the age of thirty the years of Jesus are silent.

And the same may be said of the years

between his birth and his appearance in the temple. These twelve years may be added to the following eighteen, so that we have thirty years of silence. How little is told us of the birth and infancy of Jesus. We know he was born in Bethlehem, that wise men visited him there, that he was brought when a few weeks old into the temple at Jerusalem, that he was carried for safety into Egypt and thence to Nazareth in Galilee—and that is all. The years come and go, and not a voice breaks the silence until the boy is twelve years old. Then the curtain is lifted, but only for an instant. We catch a glimpse of a boyish face, we hear the music of a boy's voice asking a question, and then the curtain drops, not to rise again until the man Jesus meets the prophet from the desert at the river Jordan.

It is surprising that since that curtain fell no one has yet been found strong

enough to raise it. It is one of the wonders of the life of Jesus that thirty years are silent. When you count the miracles of the New Testament do not forget this miracle of silence. When you marvel at the things which are said do not fail to marvel at the things which are not said. How surprising it is that almost nothing of those thirty years has as yet been discovered. Why did not the apostles go back to Nazareth and gather up information in regard to what Jesus said and did as a boy, and write it down for the instruction of countless generations which would have treasured every word? Or why did not one of the more than six hundred converts whom Jesus left behind him on the day of his ascension question the men and women of Nazareth about their townsman, and find out at least some of the things which he did as a boy, a youth, a man?

It is amazing that of all the Christians

who lived in the last half of the first century not one was able to put down on paper a single item of information concerning these thirty long and wonderful years which has reached a modern eye, although thousands of keen-eyed men have searched diligently for just such a priceless treasure. Here is a thing which the wisest men of our time are not able to do—they are not able to find out what Jesus did or said through these thirty years of silence. They can do almost anything else. They can soar into the dark stellar spaces, and measure the stars and weigh them; they can delve into the earth and read the secrets of the rocks; they can dive into the ocean and make a map of its wonderful floor; they have been for many years ransacking the mounds and tombs and ruins of buried cities, bringing forth all sorts of treasures, but not one scrap of authentic information concerning those

thirty years of silence has as yet been brought to light. A mangled sentence here and there has been discovered which may possibly have come from his lips, but uncertainty hangs round all such sayings, and not one of them adds anything of value to the information already given in the four gospels.

Why these long years of silence? The mystery becomes greater when we bear in mind who Jesus was. He was the greatest man who has ever lived, the holiest of the mighty and the mightiest of the holy. He was the Prince of Glory, the Prince of Peace. He was the Messiah, the Savior of the world, God's only-begotten Son, God's well-beloved Son whom all men are to love and honor, the lamb who takes away the sins of the world, the teacher who said: "Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away." And yet nine-

tenths of the life of this man of men, this King of the Nations, is a total blank. The curtain is down and no one can lift it. The curtain is thick and no one can see through it.

If you ask why this silence, my answer can be but a guess, but the guess is this: It pleased God to give Jesus many silent years in order that in all points he might be as we are. In living in obscurity he entered into the lot of mortals. Had all his life been open, recorded, trumpeted, he would not have been so near us as he is. The world never thinks it worth its while to chronicle the cooings and the prattlings of a baby. What does the world care for the plays, the games, the sorrows and the joys of a boy? What do the bookmakers care for what goes on in a carpenter's shop, or in any shop where things are made and sold? The routine drudgery of the world goes on from

day to day and from year to year without being heralded or written. The wise men did not write down the things which you and I did when we were children, nor have they written the things which we older folks have done as men.

Life is too ordinary, prosaic, common, to tempt the pen of genius, and the average man has, as Jesus had, a life of silent years. If we were asked to write the story of our own life the story would not be long. It is shorter still when the writing of it is left to others. Only a fraction of Jesus' life was ever put on paper,—just enough, as an Apostle puts it, to persuade the world that Jesus is the Son of God.

But while in one sense the years are not recorded, there is a sense in which every year is written in ink which cannot fade. We may not write our life on paper, but we write it in the Book of Life. There were in

a deep sense no silent years in the life of Jesus, no years which did not record themselves in the big book of human life. Jesus wrote himself on Mary's heart and on Joseph's heart and on the hearts of all the members of the Nazareth home. He left a record of himself on the mind of every boy with whom he played in the street or with whom he roamed over the Galilean fields. He impressed himself on every man he knew in Nazareth, or with whom he did business, or by whose side he sat in the Synagogue; he was recording himself all the time.

And that is what we do. We begin the writing of our life in our cradle. At least one man and one woman were different after we came. We have influenced more or less every one with whom we ever played and with whom we ever worked. We have written ourself on the hearts of all

our teachers. All our friends bear in themselves the evidence of our living. And so there are no unrecorded years. In the silent years Jesus wrote himself deep in the life of Palestine. In those thirty years he influenced the thought, the feeling, and the choices of every one with whom he had to do, and that is what we all are doing all the time. Whether we are conscious of it or not, we are writing ourselves down in the great volume of the world's life.

And because this is true, we must not be surprised to learn that the so-called silent years all sooner or later break into voice, and the hidden years, so-called, all burst upon the sight. No writer has told us on paper what Jesus did up to the age of thirty, and yet we know without being told. We have the record of three flowering years, and from this record we can tell just what Jesus said and did in the so-called years of

silence. Let us look at some of these things for a moment.

He learned to love nature before he was thirty. Nazareth stood in one of the loveliest spots in all Palestine. Looking north he could see the snowy top of Hermon, and looking eastward the rounded dome of Tabor. Looking southward his eyes swept the lovely plain of Esdraelon, and in the west he saw Carmel and the shimmering surface of the blue Mediterranean. Every spring the fields round Nazareth sparkled and blazed like the robe of a king, and the great night sky with its constellations kept right on declaring the glory of God and showing forth his handiwork. While a boy he bathed himself in the loveliness of nature, became drenched with its perfumes and glories, and so when a man he opens his mouth to speak, one catches the scent of the fields in his sentences, and feels the beauty

of spring in his sermons. How naturally he brings in the birds and the flowers, the grass and the rain, the trees and the clouds, seeing in all of them intimations and self-disclosures of God. No man begins to love nature at thirty. That is a grace which must be developed in the days of one's youth.

He learned to read men as well as Nature. Human nature is a difficult book, but he could read it. He loved to study men. He watched the children playing in the streets, overheard their laughter and their quarreling, he watched farmers at their work, and women at their housekeeping. He knew life in the street and in the fields and in the home. A little town is the best of schools in which to study human nature. In the quiet ongoing of the untroubled and unhurried days men have ample opportunity to show themselves, and

in the close contacts of the little world men come to know what human nature is. For thirty years Jesus lived in a narrow country town, and at the end of that time he was master of the secrets of the heart. He knew men's weaknesses and biases, their prejudices and passions, their whims and inconsistencies; as one of the Evangelists boldly puts it: "He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man."

Another book which he learned to read was the Scriptures. From a boy he had been familiar with them, and as soon as he comes before us we hear him quoting the Bible. He does it in a way which shows how well he knows it. He knows it so well that he can use it. It takes a deal of study to learn the Bible so thoroughly that one can use it in the critical moments of life. Jesus always used the Scripture in beating

back his foes. When the devil tempted him he discomfited him by hurling Scripture at him. When his enemies attacked him in the streets he overwhelmed them by quotations from the writings of holy men of old. When they tried to trip him up by quoting only a part of a sentence he could go on and complete it and show them they had grasped only a fragment of the truth. In his dying hour he comforted himself by repeating sentences from the Psalms. He could use Scripture as a sword, a staff or a pillow. All those years of silence must have been filled with Bible study, for no man begins at thirty to use the Scriptures as Jesus used them, if he has never studied them before.

In these thirty years he formed the habit of praying. All through his public life he is a man of prayer. He prays naturally and always. He prays before he enters on

his work, after he has won his victory, and in the stress and strain of crowded and fatiguing days. He prays early in the morning, he prays far into the night. So often does he pray that men who know him best ask him to teach them how to do it too. For him to pray was easy and satisfying and joyful, because from a boy he had poured out his heart to God in the shop and in the fields in adoration and thanksgiving. Men who do not learn early how to pray are handicapped in their later years, and often find it difficult to pray. Those pray with greatest freedom, faith and rapture, who formed the habit of often speaking to God in the simple trustful days of childhood.

He also formed the habit of going to church, or as the people in Palestine expressed it, of going to synagogue. After thirty we see him always in his place in the church on the Sabbath day. One of the

Evangelists tells us it was his "custom" to be there. The custom was formed in the thirty years of silence. From the earliest years he had been taken to the synagogue, and to be absent from a Sabbath service would have created a scandal among all good people in Nazareth. The modern foolishness had not yet taken possession of parents' hearts, that in religion and in religion only we must let children do what they please. To the end of his life Jesus was a churchgoer because he had established that habit in the days of his youth.

He had also formed the habit of thinking. As a boy he had asked questions and meditated, and as a carpenter he had thought as he had worked. It is a mistake to suppose that men who work with their hands do not think. Some of the sanest and finest thinking in the world has been done by men who all the time kept working

with their hands. Mind and hands can work at the same time. How long and carefully Jesus had thought can be seen by the daring way in which he speaks when he comes out of his obscurity at the age of thirty.

He has a message and he speaks it without a quaver or a hesitation. It is a message which is so strong and radical that it stirs the nation to the core. Even that great thinker, John the Baptist, fades away in the glory of this fresh thinker from the little shop in Nazareth. His sentences are as clear as crystal. Only men who have done much thinking are able to express themselves with clearness. The reason there is mud in much that is said to-day is because men who write and speak are too hurried to think themselves out into clearness. His paragraphs are as beautiful as they are clear. His parables are gems. Not a

writer in nineteen centuries has been able to write parables equal to his. These parables were not made on the spur of the moment: some of them, I doubt not, took their shape in the carpenter shop in Nazareth. His words carry with them a certain atmosphere which the sensitive soul can feel, and this atmosphere is the creation of a mind which is much given to meditation. There is a calmness and a restfulness in the words of Jesus given to them by a mind which has thought the problem through.

In those silent years he had formed certain convictions which went with him to the end. The difference between an idea and a conviction is that we hold the first while the second holds us. A conviction is an idea which has gotten such a grip upon us that it moulds and directs our life. In the silent years certain convictions took shape in Jesus—conceptions of God and

man, of right and duty, of this world and the next—which determined the character of his conduct and his teaching. And these convictions were not surrendered or even modified by the fierce opposition of the world. A pitiless storm beat upon his head all the way from Nazareth to Golgotha, but not one conviction melted down under the fury of the awful blast. The rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not for it was founded upon a rock. Through the years of silence the deep foundations had been laid with fidelity and care, and nothing could overturn the structure built upon them.

He had built up a disposition which was also incapable of destruction. The two tempers which strike us in the man Jesus is first his abhorrence of evil and secondly his love for human beings. How he hated

insincerity! Snobbery and foppery, pretense and putting-on, all shams and humbugs were odious to him. He struck them whenever he got a chance. And if more grown people nowadays had a deeper hatred for show and sham, there would be less humbugging than there is! And then he despised cruelty. Unkindness to a human being, especially if the man or woman was sick and forlorn or despised or poor, stirred his soul to blazing indignation. As a boy he had learned to hate hypocrisy, and to look upon every kind of cruelty with fiery detestation.

Boys, if you do not hate evil when you are young, you are not likely to hate it when you are men. You will compromise with it and raise plausible excuses for it. His hatred of evil was matched by his burning love for everything that was beautiful and good. He loved men. He pitied

them. He sympathized with them. He loved them with a love which even the meanest of men could not break down. No matter what men said about him or did against him, they could not turn him sour. He was sweet to the very center of his heart. When the soldiers drove the nails through his hands he said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

To put it all in a sentence, Jesus had in the silent years built up a character that is the wonder and admiration of the world. Inside that garden, surrounded by the hedge of silence, there had grown and blossomed in these hidden years a flower of paradise whose fragrance has filled all the world. In the dingy shop in little Nazareth there had been crystallized a character which to the end of time shall be the model and ideal of our race. And so, even though the New Testament does not tell us in so many words

what Jesus thought and said and did, in the thirty years which preceded his baptism in the river Jordan, we know substantially everything of value which took place, for the three years of recorded life are but the unfolding and interpretation of the years which were hidden.

And what is the lesson for to-day? Boys and girls don't overlook yourselves. In the New Testament the big folks overlook the little folks. That is bad, but it is still worse for the little folks to overlook themselves. Do not think for a moment that you are only getting ready to live; you are living now. Do not imagine you are getting ready to do some big thing later on. What is a big thing, the biggest thing which one can do in this world? Is it keeping a store, or making a lot of money, or arguing a case before a jury, or preaching a sermon, or publishing a paper, or making a book,

or healing sick people? No, no, no; the biggest thing which any one can do in this world is to build up his soul, and that is what you are doing now.

You are forming habits. Be careful not to form any which you will have to fight in your later years. Jesus never formed a habit which caused him trouble after thirty. Would to God we older people could all say that of ourselves. Many a man is harassed and tormented all his after life by habits formed before he was thirty. An evil habit is like a tiger lying at the door. Every now and then it springs, and the man must fight with it, losing time and strength and blood!

Now is the time to let the convictions form which shall hold you through the storms of the sea. Thousands of men are like so much sea-weed, rising and falling with the tide, drifting with the current be-

cause they are without convictions. What is sea-weed worth in the making of a world?

In these silent years certain dispositions are taking shape which will color all the years which are to come. Many a man and woman here this morning is unhappy, losing out of life the best things which life has to give, all because in the silent years dispositions were allowed to grow which were contrary to the mind of Jesus.

These are the years in which you are to decide what you are going to do. Now is the time to frame your plan. Jesus had his plan completed at the age of thirty. From the hour of his baptism onward he never wavered, hesitated, or doubled back upon his track. Men tried their best to hasten him, retard him, or turn him aside, but every time he pushed steadily forward saying—"I must!" He accomplished much

because he lost no time in retracing his steps. The men who have no plan are the men who march bravely up a hill and then march down again. They go forward for a mile, and retrace their course because their purpose is uncertain. They go in a roundabout way, losing strength and time, when they could have cut across lots, had they carried in their eye a goal.

If you want to quadruple the length of your life decide early what you are going to do. A plan is the greatest of time-savers. The public life of Jesus was only three years long, but so much was accomplished that we forget how short it was. When we hear the name of Methuselah we think how long he lived; there is nothing else to think about. But when we hear the name of Jesus we do not think of the number of his years, but of the mighty work which he accomplished. Every stroke counted, every

word told, every effort deepened the impression, and widened the influence, so that at the end of his brief life he could say: "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

In the silent years the roots of the soul established themselves in the soil. Some men are always surprising us; they do better than we thought they would, because they were better rooted than we knew. Other men are always disappointing us. They never come up to expectations, because in the silent years the growth of the roots was interfered with and stunted. The little oak is scarcely noticed standing among the beeches and birches and poplars and pines. Through ten and twenty years it goes on growing, but its progress is silent and its glory is hidden. But slowly through the century, while its neighbors fall and perish, it rises and spreads until every traveler who

passes that way stops and exclaims: "What a magnificent tree!"

Boys and girls, I urge you to remember this:—The so-called unrecorded years are every one recorded, the silent years will some day surely speak, and everything which is hidden will some time, if not here then yonder, burst upon the eyes of men and of God!

VII

WORK

"Is not this the carpenter?"

MARK 6: 3.

Preached Sunday Morning
May 13, 1906

WORK

THEY were looking at Jesus when they asked the question. The question was asked by some people in Nazareth. Jesus has been speaking in the synagogue. He has taken a piece of Scripture and unfolded it and explained it and illustrated it, and gotten light out of it, and the people of Nazareth are astonished. They begin to ask questions: "Is not this the carpenter? the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended in him." They do not like him. They shut their hearts against him. They refuse to listen to him and to do the things which he says.

"Is not this the carpenter?" This is an illuminating question. It throws light, and

it throws the light in two directions. When you hold up a lamp or lantern in order to see the face of some one approaching you in the dark, you light up, not only the face of the person approaching you, but you light up your own face as well. When these people ask the question, "Is not this the carpenter?" they light up their own faces and also the face of Jesus.

The question shows us that these men in Nazareth thought that one can account for a man simply by knowing his parents and brothers and sisters. There was nothing wonderful in Joseph nor anything extraordinary in Mary, and therefore there could be nothing great in Jesus! But in reasoning thus these people were mistaken. There was nothing wonderful about the parents of Mohammed, or of Luther, or of Goethe, or of Shakespeare. You cannot tell what a man is simply by knowing what his parents

were. God has something to do with the making of a man. These people in Nazareth supposed that under equal circumstances characters must be equal. They adopted the principle that one child must be as bright as another, and that one boy must be as good as another if they grow up in the same home. All of which is of course an error. These people overestimated the importance of circumstances and forgot that God has something to do with the making of a man. Their great mistake was that they left out God.

Their question would further indicate that in their judgment a man could not know much who never went away to school. Jesus had never gone to college in Jerusalem, he had not even attended the High School in Capernaum. He had had no advantages other than those afforded him in the humble school in Nazareth. It was

preposterous, so they thought, that a man who had never been to college should be able to instruct others—and here again they were wrong. It is not necessary for every man to go to school in order to be wise. Charlemagne was one of the greatest men that ever lived, but he could not sign his own name. God, as well as a school, has something to do with the making of a man, and these people in Nazareth left out God.

These men in Nazareth also took it for granted that a mechanic has no right to talk to his fellowmen about the high and deep things of the soul. Is not this the carpenter? the artisan, the mechanic, the manual laborer? What right has he to claim to know things about God and the soul, duty and eternity, which other men do not know? And so they were offended in him. They were indignant at him because he explained to them the Scriptures.

And thus we see that these people in Nazareth were narrow and shallow and foolish and mistaken, but let us not be too hard on them, for they were not much different from us. Some of us have sometimes felt that if we had only lived in Palestine when Jesus lived and taught, we should certainly have become his disciples, and found it easy to do his bidding. In thinking thus, however, we are mistaken. It is much easier to believe in Jesus at the distance of 1900 years than it would have been had we been permitted to hear him teach in Nazareth and Capernaum. The fact that he was a carpenter would have offended us very much. There are certain people who have a right to teach us, and when they speak we gladly listen. We look up to college presidents, and college professors, and editors, and statesmen, and generals and poets, and philosophers and

scientists, but which one of us would be willing to listen to a mechanic, especially if he should set himself up as one better fitted than anybody else to tell us who God is and how best the soul can come into harmony with him? Not one of us would have believed in Jesus had we lived in Palestine nineteen centuries ago.

But it is with Jesus and not with these questioning villagers that we are concerned to-day. Upon the face of Jesus this question throws a wondrous light. It reveals something nowhere else revealed in all the Scriptures. There is not a sentence in the Old Testament that even intimates that the Messiah of the world would be a carpenter. There is not a sentence in Matthew, Luke or John, or in any of the letters of St. Paul, which tells us that Jesus was a carpenter. There is only one sentence in all the Bible that tells us this interesting fact, and that

sentence is the sentence which I have chosen for my text. I have taken it for my text because I feared that some of you might not see it.

The fact is, many people read the Scriptures and miss this sentence altogether. They see that Jesus is a prophet and a priest and a king, but they do not see that he is a carpenter. They glory in the fact that he is the teacher, the physician and the good shepherd, but they find no joy in the fact that he is the carpenter. If you should make out this afternoon a list of all the names by which Jesus is known in the Scriptures you would write down the Lily of the Valley, the Bright and Morning Star, the Alpha and Omega, the Rock, the Way, the Truth, the Life, the Door, the Living Water, the Bread of Heaven, but your list would not be complete if you did not head it with the "Carpenter."

Even learned men who have given their lives to the study of the Scriptures have not gotten their eyes upon my text. Not long ago I looked through a large number of "Lives of Jesus," written by some of the greatest scholars of the last hundred years, and I discovered that while they had many things to say about the birth of Jesus, and about his appearance in the Temple at the age of twelve, they almost all passed at once from his visit to Jerusalem to his appearance at the Jordan to be baptized of John. O, learned men who write the life of the Son of God, you ought not to forget to tell us that he was a carpenter!

If the scholars overlook my text it is not surprising that so many members of the church never find it. Most Christians when they think of Jesus think of him as working miracles, or preaching mighty sermons, or dying on the cross. The glory of

the three years of his public life dazzles the eyes and makes all the preceding years seem dark. But certainly it is not wise to pass over eighteen years of Jesus' earthly career without a thought. If he became a man at twelve and died at thirty-three his adult life covered twenty-one years. Of this period six-sevenths was spent in a carpenter's shop, and one seventh was spent in teaching. What right have we to ignore six-sevenths of Jesus' mature life? When Jesus at the age of twelve said, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" he passed at once into the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, where he worked for eighteen years.

Through all that period he was about his Father's business, and certainly there are lessons in that business for us every one. We lose much comfort by going so seldom back to Nazareth. We like to think that

Jesus is our pattern and example, but sometimes the pattern seems so glorious and the example so lofty that we cannot follow it. Why not go back to Nazareth and see the life which Jesus lived before he became a teacher? In those eighteen years, so far as we are told, he did nothing wonderful, said nothing marvelous. He lived a quiet, uneventful, humdrum life—just such a life as the most of us must always live. He worked at his humble trade, earning money with which to buy bread and meat and clothes.

In those years it was necessary for him to pay the taxes and repair the roof and to make the garden and to do a thousand other insignificant and trifling things which make up the bulk of ordinary life. Year after year he followed the routine round of prosaic duty, simply content to be about his Father's business. When, therefore, you

feel that your life amounts to little, when the world grows gray and your task loses its sparkle, do not become discouraged, but looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith, say to yourself: "This is the carpenter."

Is not this the carpenter? the mechanic? the workman? Let us think of him this morning as a worker, not a brain worker, nor a heart worker, but simply a manual laborer. All the wise books which I have ever read agree in praising work. They all unite in condemning idleness. In all of them sloth is a cardinal sin. All sorts of harsh and ugly things are said about the idler.

Only the other day I noticed that Mr. John Burroughs, one of the wisest old men now alive, declares that "the all important thing is not health, money, friends, fame, power, knowledge, rest, but the best thing

for a man is that which keeps the currents going. The secret of happiness is something to do." That is the way wise men have been talking from the beginning. But notwithstanding all the eulogies which wise men have pronounced upon labor, a surprisingly large number of people do not like to work. Some will not work at all. They would rather steal than work. They are loafers and shirks and parasites. Some pretend to work and go through the motions of working when they are not working at all.

It is easy for a boy to keep the text book open before him while his mind is down in the street playing. A lot of grown people pretend to work just in that way. There are many persons who, while they are willing to do things which are in their opinion up to the level of their dignity, have a great contempt for manual labor. Working with one's hands is something, so they think,

low and menial and almost disgraceful. Such people speak of the laboring classes with a sneer on their lip. They talk of laboring men as though laboring men were hardly human at all. Did you never hear finely dressed ladies speaking of working girls as though working girls belong almost to a disgraced and disreputable class? It is a good thing for every person who wants to be a Christian to sit down with the Bible and try to find out just what God thinks of work.

There is no doubt as to what the Hebrews thought of it from the very beginning of their history. The Old Testament Scriptures dignify toil, eulogize it, glorify it, crown it with many crowns. The prophets, one after another, pour upon idleness the vials of their wrath and their scorn. Many hard things may be said about the Jew, but nobody can rightfully accuse him

of laziness. Wherever you find him he is up early in the morning and stays up late at night, and the only men who can successfully compete with him in any field of activity are men who are willing to do a prodigious amount of labor. It was customary among the Hebrews for every boy to learn a trade.

The Hebrews were not afraid to work with their hands. Jesus himself learned the trade of Joseph. Year after year he worked in the carpenter shop at Nazareth. Those wonderful hands of his, with which he touched the eyes of the blind and cooled the fevered brow of the sick and brought healing to the flesh of the leper, were the hands of a mechanic who had toiled year after year in an obscure little shop making things that were useful in men's homes.

Probably all of Jesus' apostles were

manual laborers except Matthew. We are told expressly that Paul, the greatest of them all, earned his living by working with his hands. Again and again in his letters Paul calls attention to the fact that he has earned his own living by manual labor. He was not ashamed of it either. He seems to have been proud of his hands because the haircloth had blackened them and the thread had left its marks on them. Listen to him as he says to the elders of Ephesus, who met him down on the sea coast at Miletus: "Ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities and to them that were with me."

The sight of his hands drew them to him and made them love him all the more. After he had prayed with them they fell on his neck and kissed him—strong men sobbing because they were to see his face no more. These are two facts, then, never

to be forgotten, that Jesus, the founder of the Christian religion, was a manual laborer, and the pierced hands into which he will gather the lives of nations and men are hands that have been disciplined by toil. Paul, the apostle, who did more for Christianity than any other man who has ever lived, also was a manual laborer, and the hands with which he grips the heart strings of the world are hands that have been stained by toil.

If you want, therefore, to be a Christian you cannot despise the laboring classes. If you wish to follow Jesus you can never speak contemptuously of manual labor. The man who feels scorn or contempt for the hand workers of the world is nothing but a snob or a perfumed barbarian, even though he wears a high silk hat and gets his boots blacked by the boot-black every morning!

These, then, are the lessons for to-day. Make up your mind that you are going to be workers. There are many things which you cannot do, but there is one thing which everybody can do, and that is work. Ralph Waldo Emerson used to get great comfort out of this fact. He said that if people told him that he had no genius then he would work the harder; that if they told him he had no virtue that he would then go home and work still the harder. Flee idleness as one of the most dangerous of all sins. Count it a disgrace to be lazy. Pity no man so much as the man who has nothing to do. If you want to be healthy, if you want to be happy, if you want to be useful, then you must work.

Never be ashamed to work with your hands. Many of you will never be called to do this, but should that be your calling, do not shirk it or be ashamed of it. In

one of Jesus' parables there is a man who says: "I cannot dig." He was a great cheat. He was lying when he said he could not dig. It would have been far better for him to dig than to do the things which he had been doing and the thing which he proposed to do. Many men would be far better off if they were digging to-day.

Boys sometimes get the idea that they are disgraced if they do not enter one of the professions. The result is that some of the professions are greatly overcrowded and other fields of activity are crying for men. A lot of young men are starving in the professions who would have made a good living if they had only been willing to dig. Digging hurts no one, nor is it ever a disgrace.

Marcus Aurelius was, according to all good judges, one of the wisest men who

have ever lived. In thinking over his life he said he had enjoyed three supreme advantages. As a youth he had been taught to endure hardness, to work with his hands, and to mind his own business. Fortunate is the boy who like Marcus Aurelius has been taught early to work with his hands.

Nor should the girls be overlooked at this point, for girls as well as boys should be trained to do things with their hands. It hurts no girl to work in the kitchen or to do the various kinds of work which must be done in a house. One of the reasons why the servant problem has become so baffling in America is because there has been too much of the old barbarian spirit in our American families, which looks down on housework as something degrading, and upon servants as an inferior class of creatures. Many an American girl has been brought up to speak impudently or

disrespectfully to the servants, and to imagine that her accomplishments were complete if she could paint a little or play upon the piano. Whenever the girl at the piano has nothing but contempt for the girl who washes the dishes, the girl who washes the dishes will have nothing but envy for the girl who plays the piano. With envy and contempt everything is spoiled.

No human being is to be scorned because he or she is a servant. The word servant is a beautiful word. Christ has redeemed it. He has told us that all his followers must call themselves servants. "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord." If any one of us wishes to be really great then he must become the servant of all. It is not necessary that all girls should work in the kitchen or that all girls should give

the bulk of their time to doing the work of the house, but every American girl ought to be trained to do three things: sew a seam beautifully, cook a beefsteak superbly, and bake a perfect loaf of bread. If a girl has not learned how to do these three things before she is twenty she has not been properly trained.

In certain royal families in Europe all the boys are taught trades and the girls are trained to do housework. The world has never had a grander queen than Queen Victoria, or one more universally loved, and it was one of the crowning glories of Queen Victoria that when a girl she had been carefully trained to do the work of the house, and that she brought up all her daughters in the same sensible and Christian way.

Never look down on those who are called to work with their hands. Hand

work is necessary and therefore it is honorable; it is ordained of God and therefore let no man despise it. But it is not the only necessary work in the world. Brain work is also necessary. Hand workers often forget this. They speak oftentimes as though they were the only workers in the world, as though men who did not work with their hands are only loafers and idlers.

The fact is, brain workers are just as essential to this world as hand workers. The world cannot get on without either class. In the building of this church the work was not all done by men who wore overalls and whose garments were bespattered with mortar. There was an immense amount of brain work done before the walls went up or even the foundations were laid. The roof was put up by the brain before it was put up by the hands,

and all sorts of interesting mathematical computations and calculations were made before the great tower finally rose into the air.

Let no hand worker despise the man who works with his brain, and let no brain worker despise the man who works with his hands. Manual labor is essential to civilization. Suppose there were no one willing to wash the windows, and suppose there were no one willing to scrub the floors. Think of the work of setting the tables for four millions of people in this city every day, and think of all the drudgery of the cooking and the washing of dishes necessary for so great a feast. Honor to the men and women who do this great work. Hand workers are not to be despised, moreover, because even though they work with their hands they may still be using their minds.

Some of the sanest and best thinking of the world is done by men who work with their hands, and some of the most morbid and crazy thinking which is done is done by men who spend their lives among their books. Mrs. Elizabeth Barrett Browning in "Aurora Leigh" tells how day after day she worked upon her lace with her needle, but even while her fingers were working with the needle she says, "My soul was singing at a work apart behind the wall of sense."

What do you suppose Paul was doing when he was making tents out of the goat haircloth? He was working out, no doubt, some of those great ideas which will burn in the firmament of thought like fixed stars forever. While he was sewing a seam he was also thinking of him who although being in the form of God made himself of no reputation, and took upon

him the form of a servant and was found in the fashion of a man. I suspect the best things in Paul's letters were all worked out when he was working with his hands.

And who knows but that Jesus may have done some of his greatest intellectual work in the carpenter shop at Nazareth? All the critics say that his language is faultless, his parables are gems unsurpassed and unsurpassable. Do you suppose he spoke those lovely things on the spur of the moment? I do not. When you see a beautiful picture you know that some artist has worked long upon it. When you hear an exquisite song you know that the singer has given to it abundant toil. When you hear language that is chaste and fine and forceful you may rest assured that the person who speaks the language has given days and nights to the conquest of his ad-

jectives and adverbs, and to the perfecting of that high and difficult art of weaving words into a texture which shall allure and captivate the minds and hearts of men.

When his fellow-townsmen said, "Whence hath this man all these things?" Jesus might, I think, have made this answer: "I got them in the carpenter shop." Not only may hand-workers be sound thinkers, but they may also be men and women of quality. Quality never depends on clothes, or rank, or station; it is a matter of the heart only. Who is a man of quality? The so-called gentleman who moves in the highest circles and who is selfish, coarse, boorish, brutal—or the man who wears the mechanic's garb and who beneath his coarse coat has a heart that is sympathetic and tender?

Persons of quality, who are they? They are people who exercise self-denial and

self-control and self-sacrifice, and they are found just as frequently in the cottage as they are found in the palace. Some of the gentlest and sweetest and wisest and greatest and loftiest souls in the world are to be found in humble and obscure places doing work which wins no applause, and only the most meager rewards. Jesus was a man of quality. He was earth's finest gentleman. As Ruskin has pointed out—A gentleman has two characteristics: he is sensitive and sympathetic. And where will you find feeling more sensitive or more sympathetic than in the simple carpenter of Nazareth?

In the Louvre in Paris there is a famous painting by Murillo. It is entitled, "The Miracle of San Diego." A door opens and two noblemen and a priest enter a kitchen. They are amazed to find that all the kitchen maids are angels. One is

handling a watering pot, another a joint of meat, a third a basket of vegetables, a fourth is tending the fire. The thought of the artist is that it is in toil and drudgery we develop qualities which are celestial.

VIII

THE WILL

"I will." MARK 1: 41.

Preached Sunday Morning
May 12, 1907

THE WILL

THE first glimpse which we catch of Jesus as a man is that which we get of him at the river Jordan on the day on which he was baptized. A great preacher has appeared at the Jordan, calling on men to turn away from their sins. He urges them to show their desire to do God's will by submitting to the ceremony of baptism. His voice has something in it which smites and pierces, and many, obedient to his word, are baptized. All sorts of men come, rich and poor, high and low, young and old, good and bad, fishermen and farmers, sailors and soldiers, shepherds and merchants, masons and vineyard dressers, publicans and common laborers, and not one of them

is turned away. The exhortation is for all, and whoever comes is received.

But all at once something happens. The procession is halted. The work of baptizing ceases. Every one stands astounded. A man has appeared whom the great preacher will not baptize. "No, no," he says, "I cannot do it, it is not fitting that I should do it, I must decline to do it, for I am the one who ought to be baptized by you!" But the stranger, brushing aside all the arguments and protestations of the preacher, quietly insists on being dealt with as the other men have been, and the stalwart, iron-willed preacher speedily succumbs. Here is a man against whom he cannot stand. Shaken from his resolution he proceeds to do what the stranger says he ought to do, and thus it was that Jesus of Nazareth entered upon his public career. It is worth

while remembering that the first sunbeam which falls upon the man Jesus reveals to us in him the trait of steadfastness, or tenacious resolution. At the very start he meets with opposition; the opposition melts and the man of Galilee is allowed to have his way.

In the first hour we are in the presence of a man of firm decision, and the impression of the first hour is deepened as we proceed. Let us think then this morning about the Will, and you may mark as the text just two words recorded in the forty-first verse of the first chapter of the Gospel according to St. Mark, "I will."

The life of Jesus was lived from first to last in the teeth of great and increasing opposition. He was obliged to fight his way step by step. Obstacles were piled up before Him, and the world conspired to beat Him back or drive Him from His course.

As a teacher He was resisted at every point. Men did not want Him to say the things He liked to say, but He kept on saying them, no matter how men hissed and cursed Him. As a physician He was opposed by men who were determined that He should not heal on the Sabbath and that He should not show mercy to lepers who were Samaritans. But He went right on doing the things for which He was hated and denounced. As a member of society He left undone things which people insisted on Him doing and did many things which brought down upon Him the scorn of the best people in the town.

For instance, all the best and most influential people said: "Do not associate with these publicans, do not go near them, or speak kindly to them." And His answer was, "I will!" Men tried to sidetrack Him in his teaching, but he went on as

though he did not see them. A learned man, Nicodemus, came to Him with problems which were uppermost in Nicodemus' mind, and Jesus compelled the learned man to talk about the things which were uppermost in Jesus' mind. An ignorant woman in Samaria tried to interest Him in discussions which were interesting to Samaritans, but he compelled her to think of the things which were interesting to Him.

A man once interrupted Him in a sermon, demanding that attention be given to some tangle involving property, but He went right on talking of the high things of the Spirit and compelled the interrupter to go along with Him. No matter who it was with whom He spoke He constrained that person to go with Him.

If His enemies could not move Him, and if strangers could not change Him, neither could His relations and friends. His

brothers had their plans for Him, but He refused steadfastly to adopt them. They wanted Him to go to Jerusalem and show the big people there what a wonderful man He was, but He refused to go. On a certain occasion His brothers, alarmed by His burning zeal and incessant labor, wanted to take Him back to Nazareth, but He thwarted all their efforts.

He loved His disciples, but He constantly resisted them. He was fond of His friends but they could not swerve Him from His path. Martha and Mary wanted Him to come to Bethany, but He went on working where He was, and did not go until the right hour had come. Peter tried to persuade Him not to go to Jerusalem, but Jesus thrust him aside and went. The crowd had its ambitions and aspirations, and tried to sweep Jesus along in the current of its feeling, but He disappointed the

crowd and proceeded along a course which He himself had chosen.

All the forces of the world massed themselves against Him, but He could not be checked or disconcerted. He was subjected to the fires of hate, but He was not melted. He was exposed to the fires of love, but He did not yield. The Pharisees, the most learned people of their day, laid hold on Him and pulled at Him, but they could not bend Him; the Sadducees, the richest people of the time, pulled at Him, but they could not bend Him. The Herodians, an influential political party of that age, grasped him and pulled at Him, but He remained inflexible and unconquerable. Winds blew a hurricane across the land, but He never swayed or wavered. Storms rushed down upon Him from the ravines of prejudice and out of the caves of hate, but He was never shaken or made to totter.

Palestine became an ocean and the huge billows dashed against Him, each billow shouting, "You shall not preach your gospel, you shall not do your work!" and His reply was—"I will!"

It is this unwavering tenacity of purpose, this unswerving persistency in conduct, this unfaltering resoluteness, this unflinching determination, this indomitable self-possession and mastery which awes and thrills every one who comes into Jesus' presence. He was a man of tremendous and unparalleled force of will.

Firm and immovable Himself He loved this will-power in others. His admiration of John the Baptist was keen and high, declaring that no greater man had ever been born of woman. One can see the cause of this admiration in a question which he one day propounded to a crowd: "Whom went ye out to see? A reed shaken with the

wind?" It was a vivid picture, for reeds grew up and down the Jordan valley and along all the little streams which tumbled into the Dead Sea. They were tall and slender, sometimes even ten and fifteen feet in height, and so thin and fragile were they that they swayed to and fro in every wind that blew. "Did you go out to see a reed shaken with the wind?"

If you could have heard Him say it you would have felt the heat of His scorn for a fluctuating man, and you would have caught His answer in the very tone in which He asked the question. John was not a bending reed, but a man inflexible as the everlasting laws of God. It was because of this that Jesus loved him, and for this reason He loved also Simon Peter. When one day Jesus asked his disciples who people supposed He was, Peter proceeded to give the variety of opinions which were in men's

mouths, and then went on to say, "But all these opinions have no influence on Me! It does not matter what the Pharisees or the Scribes or the Sadducees or the members of the Sanhedrin have to say, I stand by my first convicition, I still cling to my earliest vision, I say you are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

And Jesus, delighted with this steadfastness in a world swept by hurricanes, said: "You are well named, Peter, you are indeed a Rock, and upon this kind of rock I will build my church." It would seem, then, that the first essential in the building of a man and the one thing indispensable in the building of a church is a steadfast resoluteness, an energizing and a persistent will.

I fear that the importance of the will has been too much neglected in all our systems of education. In the public schools and in

the colleges and universities, and also in our churches, undue emphasis has been placed on other faculties, while the will has been slighted or completely overlooked. It has been a fashion too often followed, to make the memory the queen of all our mental powers. Pupils have been ranked according to their memory, and he has been counted the most worthy member of the school who has had the faculty of reciting the largest number of dates, formulas and facts. This delusion that memory is supreme and all important follows many persons all through life.

There are numerous systems of memory training, and men and women work like galley slaves in their ambition to perfect themselves in the art of not forgetting. No wail is more disconsolate or frequent than "My memory is wretched—I cannot remember—I have no memory at all!" Yet

memory is only one of the subordinate faculties of the mind. It occupies an honorable but humble room. It is a convenient and profitable servant, but it is one which we lose easily and the one which earliest decays. The highest happiness does not depend upon it, nor is the destiny of the soul determined by it. If half the attention which has been given to the cultivation of the memory had been devoted to the discipline of the will, the world would not be what it is.

There are others who are always extolling the imagination. It is, they claim, the queen of the faculties. Upon its development our happiness and usefulness in large measure depend. Many volumes have been written on the training of the imagination, and schemes have been carefully worked out by which it may be built up and enriched. But while much that has been thus

written is true, and while work expended in this direction is both pleasant and profitable, nevertheless the imagination is not the supreme power of the soul, and a man may be able to soar on the wings of fancy into the highest heavens, and still live a life that is mean and contemptible, and end his career in heartbreak and gloom.

And so there are those who have no confidence either in the memory or in the imagination. They say, cultivate memory and you have parrots, cultivate the imagination and you have dreamers, let us then cultivate the reason and all will be well. Let us teach boys and girls to think, to judge, to draw conclusions. Away with your memorizing and your soaring, and let us have more logic, let us learn how to draw conclusions from premises, and how to make distinctions between things that are not at all the same. Boys and girls if taught

to think will most certainly become kings and queens in the world!

Now it goes without saying that boys and girls ought to exercise their memory, their imagination and their reason, but it should never be forgotten that there is one faculty which is higher than all these, and that is the will. These other faculties are only pages or attendants, or, if you please, courtiers, arrayed in spangled garments; but if you will look over their heads toward the power seated on the throne, you will see that the king is the will. Around him are gathered the dispositions and inclinations, the appetites and passions and emotions, the opinions and notions and desires and ambitions and yearnings and longings and aspirations and hopes and fears and loves and hates. All these bow down before the will. It is the will which judges, decides, prefers, chooses. It is the will which issues decrees

and lays down laws and moulds life according to his own good pleasure. At the very center of the soul sits the will. He listens to what the emotions say, and the appetites clamor for, and the passions desire, and having weighed the arguments and sifted the reasons he gives his decision. He is the arbiter and maker of life.

The happiness of life depends on the will. Everyone wants happiness, but not everybody knows how happiness can be found. There is an impression that it depends on the possession of things. If this be true how does it happen that thousands of the most miserable people on earth have everything that money can buy? One can be weighed down with good things and still sigh "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" Nor does happiness depend on the things which you know. It was once supposed that knowledge is the source of joy, and that

if men were only educated and had their minds stored with the treasures of learning, then the shadows would vanish and music would fill all the days. But experience proves that knowledge has little to do with the joy of the heart, and that some of the most wretched of men are those who have mastered many a kingdom of learning. The secret of happiness does not lie in the things we have or in the things we know.

The secret of success lies in the will. There are two great surprises in the world —some men come out so much better than we expected, others come out so much worse. The reason why we are surprised and disappointed is because we assume that the secret of success lies in other things and not in the will. If a boy has a good memory and gets high grades at school, we expect great things of him. How absurd! If a young man is brilliant, if he has an imagi-

nation which flashes and an intellect which fascinates, we dream high things for him. This is foolish! In the school the boy of memory may shine, and in the parlor the young man of imagination may sparkle, but on that dusty and difficult road which runs out across the years, it is not the man of imagination or memory, but the man of tenacious and unconquerable will who wins the victories and secures the crown.

What is success but the overcoming of obstacles, and how are obstacles to be overcome? Not by memory and not by imagination and not by reason, but by the forthputting of the power of the will. There is a world of wisdom concentrated in the old proverb: "Where there's a will there's a way."

Character and destiny depend on the will. We do not differ so much from one another as we sometimes imagine, either in

feelings or ideas, in ambitions or ideals. The chief difference in men is a difference in the will. Men of the same family living under the same conditions will come out at entirely different points, because of a difference in the use of the will. Character is not something that drifts in on us like seaweed. It is a continent which is built up by numberless acts of the will. Cicero was right when he said: "To live is not to think, to live is to will." How can you account for the fact that so many of the human wrecks which find their way to the mission stations and places of refuge in our large cities are from good homes and great universities, men who have had all the luxuries and all the advantages, and yet have made shipwreck at last? There is only one explanation, and that is that the secret of happiness, of success, of character, and of destiny lies in the will.

If this be true then certainly we ought to cultivate our will. No other part of our human nature can be so strengthened by exercise, and no other faculty if neglected can bring such misery on a man, as the will. Everybody nowadays believes in the exercise of the body. It is strange that everybody does not believe in the culture of the the will. Let me give you three suggestions on this point.

Train your will to act promptly in deciding all questions of conduct, when you see clearly which act is right and which act is wrong. When you see that one course is right and the other course is wrong, your decision ought to be as quick as a flash of lightning. You cannot afford to parley, or dally, or procrastinate a single moment. If you say I know this course is right and I am sure the other course is wrong, but I shall not decide till to-morrow which course I

shall pursue, you are putting a knife into one of the arteries of your soul, and you will so weaken yourself that by and by you cannot tell which course is right and which course is wrong. The boy or girl who hesitates in deciding that he will follow the path of life, has already entered on the way that leads to death.

Train your will to hold on. When you have made a plan, carry it out. When you have decided to do a thing, do it. Do not let anything inconvenient or disagreeable daunt you or drive you back. Wordsworth having decided to take a mountain walk would not turn back when it threatened to rain, because he would not surrender to so small a thing as a shower. A rain was disagreeable to the skin, but the act of giving up a fixed purpose in view of a slight possible inconvenience was dangerous, he thought, to character. Better have a wet

skin and a triumphant heart, than a dry skin and a defeated soul. That was the opinion of Wordsworth and there is wisdom in it. Many men make plans, but they never carry them out. A thunder shower comes up and they run home. Many a woman never carries out her resolutions, all because of a shower.

Train your will to face the seemingly impossible without flinching. When things are dark, don't run away. When things are dreadful, don't collapse. When things are unbearable, don't slump down into a pulpy mass of fear. Imitate the example of the great Mirabeau, who, when some one said "Impossible!" replied "Impossible? Never mention to me again that blockhead's word!" When Napoleon's advisers told him that the Alps were in the way and that they did not see how his armies and supplies could get over them, his reply was "There

shall be no Alps," and the great mountain masses vanished as if by magic. He was the greatest general in the history of the world, because he was the incarnation of an unconquerable will. If you sometimes get discouraged and feel that circumstances are too mighty for you, repeat the lines of the English poet:

"It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll:
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul."

If at any time you shrink from taking hold of a duty that is difficult, repeat to yourself the well known lines:

"Tender-handed stroke a nettle,
And it stings you for your pains.
Grasp it like a man of mettle,
And it soft as silk remains."

Beware of the diseases of the will, only

two of which I have time to bring to your attention. Beware of the paralysis of the will. By paralysis is meant the loss of power of motion. The will may become so sick that it cannot act. There are people who are always undecided. They do not know what to think or say or do. They waver, hesitate, fluctuate. They are like chameleons, taking their color from the place in which they happen to be. They are like seaweed drifting with the current. They are like a weather-cock, changing with every movement of the wind. What an awful fate to have no more mind or character than a tin rooster! This paralysis of the will has many causes, one of which is alcohol. The terrible thing about alcohol is that in the case of many men it eats out the fiber of the will. The man discovers he is going to destruction, but he makes the discovery too late. There is a line of dead

men extending from New York City to ancient Babylon, all of them slain by alcohol. With all the ravages of this awful curse spread before us, well might one cry out with Shakespeare:

"O God, that men should put an enemy
Into their mouths to steal away their brains!"

Some boy here may say,—"I am in no danger. Alcohol would never hurt me. Only weak and foolish people ever become drunkards." Do not be so sure. Robert Burns had one of the finest minds God ever gave a man, but he died a wreck at thirty-seven. Charles Lamb was one of the sweetest spirits God ever gave to England, but Charles Lamb punctuates his writings with sobs because alcohol has eaten out the core of his will. Opium is also a cause of will-paralysis. Thomas de Quincey was a remarkable man, but opium became his mas-

ter, and if you want to know how opium destroys the nerves of the will read his "Confessions of an Opium Eater." Samuel Taylor Coleridge was one of the greatest of geniuses, but opium attacked him and overthrew him, and while he began many mighty enterprises he never completed any of them, all because opium had destroyed the iron in the will.

There are other bad habits which will bring on this will-paralysis. Indulgence of any kind will do it. Laziness will do it. Physical indolence paves the way for it. If you have flabby muscles you will most likely have a flabby will. Moral laziness is certain to bring it on. If you allow trains of thought to run where they will, and streams of feeling to flow where they please, and flocks of fancies to fly where they wish, while you sit lazily by looking on, your will slowly but surely withers and fades

away, and by and by you will have no control whatsoever over the kingdom of your soul. It is your business to direct the trains of thought, and to control the currents of feeling, and to rule all the flocks of fancies, and if you do not exercise the power of choosing, ruling, deciding, you will end at last a pitiable and disconsolate slave.

A man with paralysis of the will is like an ocean steamer with its steering apparatus gone. The steamer goes down the harbor and everybody is happy. The decks are spacious, the engines are superb, the cabins are luxurious, the larder is filled with all the good things which the palate knows, but, alas, there is no one who can turn the great vessel to the right or left, or who can compel her to travel a straightforward course, and so the winds play with her, and the currents toy with her, and the storms make sport of her, and they drive her far-

ther and farther out of her course, until at last in disgust at her they dash her against a rock and pound her into splinters, and the angry sea bellows as it closes over her: "She is gone!" That is a picture of a soul starting out in life with a will which is paralyzed.

But there is another disease no less lamentable and fatal—we may call it the bloating of the will. The will may become enlarged, unwieldy, puffed up, and unsightly. One may so cultivate the will as to make it sick. It may become overdeveloped, misshapen, perverted. A man may so pride himself upon his will as to become wilful—full of will, so full of will that everything else is crowded out. Such a man becomes headstrong, or heady. He is all head and no heart. Boys and girls get heady and say "I will" and "I won't," and when in this mood they are unwilling to

listen to fact or reason. The will has taken complete possession of the mind and like a blind and bloated tyrant it lords it over the entire life of the soul. This disease goes with some men and women all the way through life. They are always heady, headstrong and wilful. You can never teach them anything. They will have their own way every time. They get an idea and will never change it. They adopt a plan and will never modify it. No matter how silly their idea, or unwise their policy they will cling to it to the bitter end. Persuasion can do nothing, reason can do nothing, wisdom can do nothing, they are obstinate, or as we sometimes say, stubborn as a mule. In paralysis of the will one sinks to the level of a tin rooster, in the bloating of the will one sinks to the level of a beast which has much muscle and little sense.

Persons thus afflicted often pride themselves on their strong will. The fact is that wilfulness is a disease, a form of weakness. The will is never strong unless it can bend the knee. If a man tells us he cannot get down on his knees, we know there is something the matter with him. He is a cripple, an invalid, for all men in normal health can drop easily to their knees. So it is with the will. If it is so stiff it cannot kneel, it is a sick and bloated will, and its crazy decisions will lead to misery and disaster at the last.

Would you see the perfect will, then look at Jesus. His will was so tenacious that no power could ever drive him from his purpose, and yet his will from first to last was surrendered. This fact comes out in the story of the baptism. He insisted on being baptized, not because he needed baptism, but because his baptism was necessary

to carry out the plans of God. He had no sin, but he was a brother of all sinful men and he wanted to take his place among them, and strengthen them by standing with them. That was his attitude always. He did not want his own way, but only the way of God. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." "I do always those things which are pleasing unto him." In the last great crisis of his life he cried: "Not my will, not my will, but thine be done!"

The secret of the tenacity of his will lay in the completeness of his surrender to the law of love. He loved God so completely that the world could not move him, and he loved man so truly that man's whims and follies, unreasonableness and injustice, hatefulness and cruelty could not chill the fervor of his affection or change by one iota the scope and nature of his work. From the first he was determined to do the will

of God, and when men and devils rose against him, saying, you shall not do the will of God, his calm reply to all was, "I will."

When Thomas Carlyle was seventy years old he was invited to come back to his Alma Mater, the University of Edinburgh, and deliver an address. He accepted the invitation, and poured out into the students' ears a wealth of wisdom gained in the fifty-six years which had come and gone since he entered that institution as a Freshman. He told them many profound and wise things, which I hope you will all some day read, closing his address with a few stanzas from a German poem which had, he said, the sweet clear tone of a modern psalm:

"Solemn before us,
Veiled, the dark portal,
Goal of all mortal.
Stars silent rest o'er us—

Graves under us, silent.
But heard are the voices,
Heard are the sages,
The worlds and the ages:
'Choose well: your choice is
Brief, and yet endless.'"

IX

HONESTY

"Thou shalt not Steal." Ex. 20, 15.

Preached Sunday Morning
May 10, 1908

HONESTY

MY subject is "Honesty," and my text is the eighth commandment: "Thou shalt not steal." A famous Englishman said a few years ago that he had never heard a sermon on Honesty. I do not know whether he did not go often to church, or whether the churches in his part of England were not making a specialty just then of the Christian virtues, but I do not want any boy or girl who reads this to grow up and be able to say in later life what the disappointed Englishman said.

Honesty is one of the oldest of the virtues. In one sense all virtues are of the same age. They are all old as God. But they came into this world at different times,

and even after they are here it is often a long while before men see that they are really virtues. They come into our world with veils on their faces, and that is why they are not recognized at first. Mercy is not so old a virtue as honesty. There was a long time before men came to see how beautiful and heavenly it is. Humility is the youngest of all the virtues. It is not older than the Christian religion. Before Jesus came, humility was thought to be a weakness or vice. But the prophet of Galilee saw the beauty of it, placed a crown on its head, and ever since he crowned it, the world has counted it one of the greatest of all the virtues.

But honesty is a very old virtue. It was born in the morning of the world. It is a gray-headed, wrinkled, old virtue which has come down the highway of many centuries, and its feet are all covered with dust,

and its coat is seedy and threadbare, and possibly that is one of the reasons why so many people will have nothing to do with it.

It is a plain virtue. Some virtues are showy and even gaudy. They wear robes of crimson velvet trimmed with gold lace and are full of glitter and sparkle. Heroism is one of these pompous virtues. Everybody looks at it and praises it. But honesty is a very quiet, sober virtue. It always dresses in linsey woolsey and never makes a show. It is a Quaker in the family of virtues, and perhaps it is because of its plain drab coat that so many people do not take much interest in it.

Thus far I have spoken of Honesty as though it were a man, but now I want to talk about it as though it were a kind of fruit, and that is really what it is, a sort of fruit created by the Spirit of God in the

human heart. If we look at it as a sort of fruit then we can say that it grows on one of the lowest branches of the tree of life. Little folks standing on the ground can easily reach it. There are many kinds of fruits which grow high up among the topmost branches, and boys and girls cannot get at them. There is nothing to do but to wait and grow.

Honesty is so low down that even a five-year-old can reach out and touch it with his hand. There are many fine things in this world which only a favored few can ever hope to gain. They are high above the ground and the average person cannot reach them. He has no ladder and if he had, he lacks the strength to lift the ladder to its place. He cannot climb, for he does not have the kind of strength by means of which men climb to lofty heights. For instance, the ability to paint or sing, to write

a great poem or contrive a great invention, to lead an army or rule a state, to do any one of these things is a high accomplishment and only a few mortals, no matter how hard they try, can ever reach the top of the tree where this glittering golden fruit is growing.

Honesty is within the reach of everybody. You may have a poor memory and a poor imagination and a poor education and a poor chance to get many a thing which the world counts of value, but every one of you can reach out your hand and take possession of this beautiful fruit of Paradise. When we make a list of the things which we cannot do, the list is long. When we write a list of things which it is possible for us to do, the list is short. But no matter how short the list, there is always one thing which every human being is able to say, and that is "I can be honest." Never for-

get, then, that honesty grows on one of the lowest of the branches.

And yet while honesty is within the reach of everybody it is not easy to be honest. That this is the case is proved by the large number of persons who are dishonest. People as a rule like to do the thing which is easy, and if it were easy to be honest we should have many more honest men than we have. In Asia and Africa and Europe and Australia there are hundreds of thousands of people—so travelers say—who are dishonest.

In this respect the New World is like the old. America also has hundreds of thousands of dishonest men and women, and this is surprising when we remember how many schools and churches there are, all of them teaching boys and girls, and men and women to be honest. It must be hard indeed to be an honest man, else other-

wise there would not be so many rogues. And what is true to-day has been true ever since the world began. From the very beginning men have spoken dishonest words and done dishonest things, and all because they have had dishonest hearts.

It seems to be as hard now to be an honest man as it was thousands of years ago. The fruit grows down low to the ground and yet it is difficult to get it. How hard it is may be seen by a study of our language. I intended to make you a list of the words which express the many shades and grades and forms of dishonesty, but when I began to write them down I found I could not get them into my sermon and leave room for the things I wanted to say. I started with "thief," "burglar," "robber," "pick-pocket," and "shoplifter," and I then went on to "forger," "defaulter," "embezzler," "swindler" and "cheat," and then such

crowds of other dark words came trooping around me, that I decided to let each one of you make out the list for himself.

How does it happen that we have so many bad and ugly names? It is because we are members of a dishonest race. Names are simply tags which we pin to people so that we can tell them from one another, and the reason we have so many rogue tags is because we have so many different kinds of people who have broken the eighth commandment.

Of course it is easy to keep away from certain forms of dishonesty, for there are kinds of stealing which are very vulgar and coarse. I do not suppose you will find it hard to keep from breaking into a house, or blowing open a safe, or picking somebody's pocket, or forging a note. Those are very shabby kinds of stealing which well-bred people never think of indulging

in; but there are fine and polite forms of theft which elegant gentlemen commit without blushing, and they steal so skillfully and so successfully that it hardly seems like stealing at all. There are men who would not for the world steal a gold watch, but they would steal a gold mine; they would never stoop to take a man's silver spoons, but they would take his whole house with everything in it; they would never steal railroad spikes, but they would not hesitate to steal the whole railroad. The most dangerous thieves in America to-day are as well dressed and as polite and as good looking and as gracious as any person in this congregation. It is not hard to keep away from certain forms of dishonesty, but to keep away from dishonesty of every sort, that is hard indeed.

It is easy to keep out of the Penitentiary. Most men do. Almost any man can if he

is careful. The Government does not pay attention to more than a few kinds of lies and a few sorts of thefts—just a handful out of thousands. You might lie all day long and no policeman would ever arrest you, and you might be dishonest in scores of ways and still never go to jail. The courts have more than they can do now, without adding to their burden by paying attention to still other forms of dishonesty. I do not say that it is hard to keep out of the hands of the policeman. All I say is that it is hard to be honest. Honesty has to do, not simply with dollars, but with everything which people possess. One may steal money, and he may also steal time and energy and reputation and the rights and happiness of others. A man may be dishonest with his hands and also with his mind and his heart. We are bound to be honest, not simply in our deeds, but also in our words

and thoughts and feelings and motives. Honesty is something which goes down into the very center of the heart, into the very core of one's being. To be honest clear through—that is difficult indeed.

Let me urge you then to begin to-day to cultivate honesty with fresh vim and determination. Make it your business to be honest, and stick to this business as long as you live. It is a matter which you must work out each one for himself. Honesty is a treasure which cannot be inherited. Your parents can give you money and houses, but they cannot give you an honest heart. Your father may be as honest a man as ever lived, but he cannot bequeath his honesty to you. Many an honest father has had a dishonest son. Nobody can give you this virtue. Not one of your teachers or pastors or friends, no matter how dearly he loves you, can make you a present of this

beautiful thing. You cannot buy it. It is not for sale. The stores have thousands of things to be gotten for money, but honesty is never on sale. Even God cannot give it to you, unless you want it and work for it. If he could give it to you, he could give it to everybody, and if he could give it to everybody, of course he would. He cannot give it to you or to anybody else. Every one must love honesty and win it for himself. Begin to-day, then, if you have never begun before, upon the great work of building up an honest heart.

The reasons why I ask this are three. In the first place it is a shameful thing to be dishonest. If you are dishonest you have nobody but yourself to blame. When a person has a hare-lip, or a club-foot, or a hunch-back, or any deformity of limb, our heart goes out to that person in sympathy and pity. The person is not to blame for

his defect. He inherited it, was born with it, or it is the result of accident or disease. But dishonesty is a deformity of the human spirit for which the person who has it is himself responsible. He himself has taken his soul and deliberately twisted it out of shape. He has made himself a dwarf, a miserable crooked pigmy. He cannot walk as a man ought to walk, nor stand up as a man ought to stand. Whenever he finds himself in the company of honest men he feels his degradation, he knows he is a cripple, and not a full-statured man. This is the first reason why you should never permit yourself to be dishonest, because dishonesty is disgraceful, scandalous, low, mean, vile, dirty!

In the second place it is wicked. When a thing is contrary to the will and wish of God we call it wicked. God is an honest God, and we as his children are intended to

be like him. If we are dishonest we are unlike him, and cannot live in harmony with him, either in this world or in any other. By our dishonesty, moreover, we harm others. We throw this world into confusion. Our brothers and sisters in the human family have a right to the truth from our lips, and if we tell them falsehoods we rob them of their rights and by so doing wound the heart of God. We cannot do wrong to any of his children without offending him. Flee dishonesty, then, because it is wicked, a sin against your brothers, and sisters, and also against your best friend, your Heavenly Father.

In the third place, it is dangerous to be dishonest. Dishonest people are punished fearfully. There is no escape. It is not hard to escape from the policeman or the jailor. The fingers of civil law are clumsy and many scoundrels get away. But there

is a Judge from whom nobody gets away, and that is God. He has appointed certain punishments for dishonesty and from these there is no escape. Not one man in the long history of the race has ever done a dishonest deed and has escaped paying the penalty of his sin. You never can get away from yourself, can you? If you are a rogue, you must always live with a rogue, eat with him, walk with him, work with him, go to bed with him. Every man here who has ever stolen a dollar is thinking of his theft now. He will think of it on his death-bed. He will think of it in the next world.

If you cut your hand with a knife, the wound will heal. The scar may remain, but the scar will not hurt you. Do a dishonest deed and you cut a gash in your soul which leaves a scar and whenever you press the scar with your memory the scar hurts.

Every Government has what it calls a Conscience Fund, made up of money which has been returned by those who have in various ways defrauded the Government. Sometimes the money is not returned for ten or twenty or even thirty or forty years. Why is it returned at all? Because the thief is suffering. He cannot stand his punishment any longer. God has been whipping him through his conscience during all of the years, and at last he says, "This is more than I can bear. I will send the stolen money back." Suppose he does not send it back, and goes into the other world from which it is impossible to send money back, then what? In a universe governed by an honest God it is a frightfully dangerous thing to be dishonest.

Because, then, dishonesty is shameful and wicked and dangerous, you ought always to fear, hate and abhor it. To abhor is to

hate hard. It is not enough to dislike it or hate it only a little. You ought to detest it, loathe it, shudder at it, shrink from it with horror. Up in the Zoölogical Garden in the Bronx there is a snake house full of writhing serpents, and in one of the cages in that house there is a black snake called the Cobra, the most poisonous of all known reptiles. I like to look at him because the glass is thick and I know he cannot get out. But if some day when you are in the snake house that Cobra should by some chance get out, how the boys would run and the girls would scream! Dishonesty is a serpent and it is out! It is more deadly than a Cobra. It will get its fangs into you if you are not careful, and if it once bites you, the poison will go through every artery of your soul.

You will always find people who will tell you that dishonesty is not a serpent and that

it is not deadly at all. There are many excuses manufactured for the purpose of covering up the ugliness of this sin, but no matter how pretty the excuses, always remember that every one of them is a lie. The more dangerous the sin the larger the number of excuses will the Devil suggest to prove that the sin is not heinous at all. Men have a thousand ways of excusing themselves in their dishonest practices and you boys will hear them very soon. You will hear men say, "I must live." That is a great mistake. It is not necessary to live. The world would be far better off if a lot of people now living were dead. It is not necessary for any man to live if he lives a dishonest life. Better far die than to live ignobly.

"But I have got to succeed," so men say and go right on doing dishonest deeds in order to win success. But it is not neces-

sary to succeed. What is success but a bubble which bursts in a moment? No man really succeeds who gets what he wants by dishonest means. He is a dead failure. It is not necessary to succeed as the world counts success. Jesus of Nazareth did not succeed. His life was a fearful failure. He tried to save his country from destruction, but he failed, and for his trouble, got himself crucified between two robbers. God has planted that failure at the very center of human history, in order to warn boys and girls against setting their hearts on success.

It is not necessary to succeed. But one thing is needful and that is to do the will of God. Others say, "In order to be rich one cannot afford to be too careful about the method by which he makes his fortune." But it is not necessary to be rich. Whether a man is rich or not is one of the most in-

significant of all matters. No man can be rich very long, and even while he has his money, the money is not the chief possession of the man. No one is under the slightest obligation to be rich. God demands only that every man shall be honest.

But some young man says, "Unless I lie and cheat I cannot keep my position." Then give it up! It is not necessary to hold a position, no matter how good it is. Whatever the salary may be, it is not large enough to pay a man for being a rogue. There are some things which if a man debate even for a moment, he endangers the life of his soul, and this is one of them. A man cannot afford to remain in any position which compels him to surrender his honesty. Business men who are in a business which drives them into dishonest courses must give up their business, no matter at what financial loss. The question is not

debatable. Better be a beggar and honest than the most successful man in the town, with the mind of a liar and the heart of a thief.

You will hear men say, "Ah, there are no honest men. Everybody nowadays is more or less dishonest. It is impossible to do business any more without a certain amount of deception." The men who speak thus are without exception bad. When a man dips his brush into pitch and smears other men all over, it is simply to make others black that his own blackness may not be conspicuous. It makes a liar feel comfortable to think of all men everywhere as living on his own low level.

Fear the man who blackens the reputation of his fellow men, for he is a man with a blackened heart. Never let others apologize for your dishonesty and never excuse it yourself. If in a moment of weakness

you fall, do not try to convince yourself that you did not fall, but look yourself bravely in the face and say, "Oh, you thief. Oh, you liar. How I hate you!" A man who lies and steals ought at least to have sufficient courage to look himself squarely in the face and not try to cover himself over with the soft veil of deceitful excuses.

This brings us to think about the use of religion and the purpose of the Christian church. Why do we have a church? What is its supreme work? Is it to teach people to pray and to read the Bible and to sing hymns? Church attendance and the memorizing of Scripture verses and the celebration of the Lord's Supper are all good, if they lead to something. If they lead to nothing they are foolishness and a sham. They are intended to lead to a Christ-like character, and no character is Christ-like which is not built on honesty.

HONESTY

To persuade boys and girls, and men and women, to give themselves whole-heartedly to the hard work of being everywhere and always honest—this is the supreme work of our church and of all churches. If any boy here should some day become a thief, we should all hang our heads in shame, feeling that all the work of Bible School and Church had been expended on him in vain. It would give us no comfort to remember that he had been punctual in attendance, that he had answered the questions promptly, that he had been one of the brightest and best boys in the class. Unless Bible school boys become honest men, then the Bible school workers have failed. If any girl of the church should some day become a woman of whom her acquaintances should say, "We cannot depend on anything she says," then all of her church going and Bible school attendance would

count for nothing, for the Christian church has nothing to be proud of except the honest men and the honest women whom she presents to the world. "You can always rely upon him!"—what finer thing can be said of any man than that? "He was an honest man!" Around an open grave there is no eulogy sweeter than that.

When Abraham Lincoln was called to the White House a fearful storm was brewing. Black clouds had massed themselves around all the horizon, and were rapidly climbing up the sky. Soon after the new President reached Washington the storm broke with frightful fury, and the Republic quaked from top to foundation. Through the four awful years of storm the hearts of men often sank within them, and more than once hope would have completely died, had they not been able to turn their faces toward the Capitol and brace

their spirits by looking into the face of the man whom they lovingly called "Honest Abe." At the darkest crisis which the Republic had ever known, men could find no greater, diviner adjective to place before the name of the nation's ruler than that plain and simple word, "Honest." He was indeed "Honest Abe." He blessed us all the years that he lived among us. His memory is a blessing forevermore. An English poet has expressed what all good men feel, "An honest man's the noblest work of God."

X

BEING A CHRISTIAN

"Follow Me." JOHN 1:43.

Preached Sunday Morning
May 9, 1909

BEING A CHRISTIAN

THERE are millions of human beings in our world who are known as Christians. There are tens of thousands of churches composed of Christians, and the chief aim of all these churches is to make still other Christians. It is said of one man, "He is a Christian," and of another, "He is not a Christian." The question is sometimes asked, "Are you a Christian?" and now and then one hears the sigh, "I wish I were a Christian!" The word is used as though it had a definite and familiar meaning, one perfectly understood by everybody, and yet it is not safe to take too much for granted. It may be that some boy or girl who hears me speak, does not know just what a Christian is, or if he does know, he cannot tell. I have met even

grown folks who did not seem to know, for when asked for a definition they hesitated and stammered in ways that proved that their minds were quite confused. Now in a world in which so much is spoken and written concerning Christians, and so much is attempted and done by professing Christians, and so great importance is attached to the act of becoming a Christian, it is certainly worth while to try to get a clear idea of what a Christian really is, so that we may know Christians when we see them, and may be able to decide whether we ourselves are Christians or not.

There are five questions which every alert boy and girl is sure soon or late to ask, and it is those five questions to which I now invite your attention. The questions are these: What is it to be a Christian? How may one become a Christian? How early is it possible or permissible to become

a Christian? How can one know that he is a Christian? How can one remain a Christian?

To find out what it is to be a Christian we need only to open our New Testament and read a few chapters in any one of the four Gospels, for there we get the idea of Jesus, and his idea is sure to be both clear and correct. The men who wrote the Gospels are all agreed that Jesus' favorite exhortation was "Follow Me!" Those who followed him were at first called disciples, but later became known as Christians. A Christian, then, according to the New Testament, is one who follows Jesus.

But right here another question must be faced and answered. What is it to follow Jesus? Is it to imitate him, his dress, his manners, his way of life? To follow him must we wear sandals and a turban and a tunic, lie down on the floor when we eat,

and eat the precise dishes of which he was fond? Must we work for a season in a carpenter's shop, then travel from city to city as a wandering preacher, speaking parables and exhorting people to be good? Oh, no! To follow does not mean to imitate either the dress or the customs or the outward forms of behavior. To follow a man means to accept his principles and to obey his orders. A follower of Darwin does not feel obliged to dress as Darwin dressed or to live as Darwin lived. A Darwinian accepts the doctrines which Darwin taught. A follower of Lincoln did not live in the White House or send messages to Congress. He simply accepted Lincoln's principles of statesmanship and assisted him in the saving of the Union. Sometimes followers are known as "adherents" because they stick to or cling to their leader. Sometimes they are called "supporters" because they

hold up their leader's cause. Sometimes they are called "backers," because the leader can fall back upon them for influence and assistance. Sometimes they are called "disciples" or "learners," because they are instructed by their leader and make his ideas their own. A Christian, then, is a follower, an adherent, a supporter, a backer, a learner of Jesus. Any one who accepts Jesus' teaching and obeys or tries to obey his orders is a Christian.

But at this point another question faces us. What is the teaching of Jesus? It can all be summed up, I think, in one sentence. God is a loving Father and all human beings are his children, and every one of them can come to the Father through his well-beloved son Jesus. And what are his commandments? They can all be reduced to one—Love. When men asked him to tell them the greatest of all com-

mandments, he said, "Love God and love your neighbor," and he was never able to add anything to that. There is nothing else which it is possible to add. Love expresses everything. Shortly before Jesus died on the cross he said to his disciples: "A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another even as I have loved you." This was in reality nothing but the old commandment made new by being held in the light of Jesus' life. Let us fix it then firmly in our mind that a Christian is one who believes something about Jesus and who does something for him. He believes that God is a Father, that all men are his children, and that all men can come to the Father only through Jesus. He may believe a hundred other things and still be a Christian, but the thing that makes him a Christian believer is the thing which I have stated about God, and Man and Jesus. But

a Christian is a doer as well as a believer, and the one thing he must do is to love. He may do a hundred other things and still be a Christian, but the thing which makes him a Christian doer is loving God and loving man.

How can one become a Christian, or in other words how can one become a follower or adherent or supporter or backer or learner of Jesus? It has often been counted a hard question and very long and puzzling answers have been given. To become a Christian has sometimes been made a matter so difficult and so mysterious that even grown folks have been bewildered and baffled. But according to the New Testament there is nothing mysterious or wonderful at all in becoming a Christian. Provided a man wants to become a Christian nothing can be simpler or easier. When Jesus said to certain men in the first cen-

tury, "Follow me" and they followed him, they became Christians from that hour. So is it to-day. One became a Christian in Palestine by making up his mind to be one, and one becomes a Christian in America in precisely the same way. You all know what it is to make up your mind. You have made it up a thousand times and you know exactly how to do it. You make up your mind to go to school, to read a book, to play a game, to take music lessons, to go on a visit, to learn a trade. Just so you make up your mind to go to school to Jesus, to take lessons from him, to read the book which tells about him, to listen to him and to obey him. There is nothing mysterious about this. Anybody can do it who wants to do it. A little boy can do it, a young man can do it, an aged man can do it. Anybody can do it if he only wants to.

Of course it means a great deal to become

a Christian. If you decide to accept the doctrine of Jesus you must turn your back on all teachers who teach anything different from him. If you make up your mind to obey his orders, you cannot take orders from any one else. Becoming a Christian means turning away from everything you believe to be wrong, it means turning toward everything you think to be right. It means that you are to speak the truth, for speaking falsehoods is breaking the commandment to love, and it means that you are to be honest in word and deed, for dishonesty is also a violation of the law of love. It means that you are to strive always to control your temper and hold your tongue, for if you do not do this you sin against love. You have made up your mind to live a new life, when you make up your mind to follow Jesus.

But some big boy now puts in this question: "Is it not necessary to have faith in

order to become a Christian, and must not one repent and be converted and have a change of heart and be born again and be regenerated?" And the answer is Yes, you must believe and repent and be converted and be born again, but you need not bother about any of these long names. All of these things have been fulfilled whenever one makes up his mind to follow Jesus. No one could or would make up his mind to follow a leader unless he had faith in that leader, and the act of turning from an old leader to a new one is conversion, and no one would ever turn, were there not a change of mind, which is repentance, and a change of heart, which is regeneration. But the mastery of big words is not necessary to make one a Christian. A Christian is a follower of Jesus, and any one who follows him has repented and has been converted and has been born again.

One might, to be sure, make up his mind to follow Jesus and yet not do it, just as one might decide to do anything else and later on change his mind. And so it is hardly correct to say that making up one's mind is everything. That is the first thing, but this action of the mind must show itself in conduct. One must not only make up his mind to follow Jesus, but he must begin forthwith to do it. And the first act by which he makes it clear to the world that he is indeed a follower of Jesus is called "confession." The act by which Jesus wishes his disciples to confess that they are his, is baptism, and that is the reason why every one who makes up his mind to follow Jesus is sooner or later baptized. When men in Jerusalem one day asked Simon Peter what he wanted them to do, his reply was, "Repent ye and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." In saying this he was say-

ing: "Turn to Jesus and confess him." The Apostle Paul says that if we confess with the mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead we shall be saved. This, then, is our conclusion in regard to the matter, that to become a Christian one must first make up his mind to follow Jesus and then begin at once both by word and deed to show that he is doing it.

The next question need not detain us long, although the answer to it has not always been correctly given. The disciples of Jesus were on a certain occasion rebuked by their Master because of their mistaken notion of the privileges of children, and a good many grown people since the days of the Apostles have merited a similar rebuke. It has been often asserted that little boys and girls cannot become Christians, and that it is necessary for them to wait several years

until they have grown up and are able to understand most or all of the big words which the preacher makes use of in his sermons. I have known boys and girls who wished that they could become Christians, but who felt it was impossible because they were not yet old enough. Now all this is a big, sad mistake. Any one is old enough to become a Christian who is old enough to make up his mind to follow Jesus. As soon as one can understand that there is a good being named Jesus, and can feel a desire to please him, he is old enough to call himself a Christian. All boys and girls old enough to walk and talk, to think and to feel, are old enough to become followers of Jesus, and if they try to please him they ought always to think and speak of themselves as Christians. It would be a great pity if a boy or girl should feel that he or she could not become a follower of Jesus until some

particular birthday had been reached, or until a certain amount of the Bible had been learned.

Jesus does not lay down any such narrow or foolish lines, and we should not lay them down. As soon as one wants to follow Jesus, he can do it. As soon as he does it he is a Christian. But what shall we say of the little children who are not old enough either to walk or to talk or to think? They cannot call themselves Christians. What shall we call them? I think we have a right to call them Christians, for I do not know of a better or higher name. Surely we want to give them the very best name in our possession, for the reason that "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God has perfected praise," and Jesus himself has declared that "of such is the kingdom of heaven." If he desired that little "tots" who could not walk to him should be car-

ried to him, I feel sure he would not object to having them bear his name.

How can one know that he is a Christian? Here again the answer is much easier than many people have imagined. It has sometimes been said that one cannot know, that the very best we can do is simply to trust and hope. Many good people have said and believed this, but they have not been wise. Their mind has become confused, and although they have been sincere in their opinions they have made not only themselves miserable but everybody else who has been willing to accept their ways of thinking. For how could one be happy if he did not know whether he was a Christian or not? Perplexity in important matters is distressing. If it is important that one shall be a Christian, it is certainly desirable that he should know whether he has succeeded in becoming what

he wants to be. When men and women say, "I hope I am a Christian," or "I trust that I am a Christian," they are using language which does not have the New Testament ring. It lacks the New Testament certainty and therefore lacks the New Testament joy. It is sometimes thought that if a person is sure that he is a Christian, and says so, he is presumptuous, and that to say, "I hope I am a Christian" is a mark of humility. All such talk is no evidence of humility, but proof of confusion in the mind. If grown folks get confused it is not surprising that boys and girls should find themselves perplexed. One cause of their perplexity is their failure to do what they know they ought to do. When one thinks or says or does something which he knows is not right he is apt to say, "I do not believe I am a Christian at all."

Let us come back, then, again to our defi-

nition of Christian. If a Christian is a follower of Jesus, ought it to be difficult to find out whether one's aim is to follow him or not? We have no difficulty in deciding such questions in other departments of life. If you are going to school to a certain teacher and some one asks you if you are his pupil, you do not say, "I hope so." If you are being treated by a physician and some one asks if you take his medicine, you do not reply, "I trust so." If you are the friend of anybody, and are asked if you are indeed the friend of that person, you do not say sadly, "I think I am but am not certain." If a man is a carpenter he knows it, if he is a lawyer or farmer he knows it, if he is a supporter of the President in his policies he knows it, if he is a citizen of a certain city he knows it, if he is fond of Mozart or Wagner he knows it. In short, we never have any difficulty in deciding

what we are until we come to religion, and then all at once we become uncertain and bewildered. But this is both needless and mischievous. We ought to know positively whether or not we are Christians, and if we are Christians we ought to say so both to ourselves and to others. The more certain we are that we are followers of Jesus the stronger we shall be in doing his will.

But here some big boy comes in with the remark that he does not know whether or not he is a Christian, because he does not remember the precise hour in which he became one. He is not the only person who has gotten into difficulty at that point. But how needless it is to lose one's way here. The ability to remember the exact moment in which one makes up his mind to follow Jesus is of no importance whatever. Do you remember the time when you first opened your eyes and saw the trees and the

sky? Certainly not. How do you know then that you are alive? Simply by your feelings, your thoughts and your actions. It is a matter of no importance when you began to live, the important thing is that you are alive now. What does it matter when you became a Christian, or whether you remember the day or the hour or not? The one thing which it is important for you to know is whether or not you are a Christian now, and you can get light on that important question, not by going back to the beginning of your Christian life, but by noting the kind of life you are living now. If you are the follower, supporter, and learner of Jesus, then you may be assured that you are a Christian, no matter how thick may be the fog that hangs round the beginning of your Christian life.

We come now to the last question which is the most interesting and difficult of all:

BEING A CHRISTIAN

How can one remain a Christian? It is easy enough to become a Christian and to know that one is a Christian, but to remain a Christian is not so easy. It is easy to enroll as a pupil in a school, but it is not so easy to finish the course. It is easy to enlist in an army, but it is not so easy to fight through all of the campaigns. It is easy to begin to build a tower, but it is not easy to finish. How can one remain a Christian through all of the years down to the very end of the chapter, that is a question indeed. Let me give you three bits of advice, each bit expressed in a word of one syllable, and I give them to you with great boldness and gladness because they are favorite words of Jesus.

The first word is "Watch." Keep your eyes open. Be on the lookout. Do not get careless. Do not go to sleep. Being a Christian is serious business, and in order

to succeed one must have all his wits about him. Watch, first of all, your body. You must make it your servant. Be careful what you eat and drink. Get an abundance of sleep, an abundance of air, and use an abundance of water. What you need is energy, and you cannot secure energy unless you keep your body in the very best possible condition. If you lack energy your feelings are likely to become morbid, and worse than that your will power is almost sure to become weak, and with morbid feelings and a weak will, you will find it impossible to follow Jesus. In order to control all your appetites and passions and impulses and inclinations—and all of these are as strong as horses—it is necessary for you to have an abundance of energy, and you can get energy by taking care of your body.

Next, watch your mind. Do not let it play off on you. Hold it up to a

high standard of duty. Do not let it play with things which are dirty. Do not let it become a nest for thoughts which are vile. Do not allow it to debate such questions as "ought I to speak the truth?" or "ought I to do what is right?" If you stop to argue such questions you are almost certain to fall. Keep a sharp eye always on your mind, or as Paul used to say, "Gird up the loins of your mind." Watch also your associates. You can catch measles and whooping-cough, you can also catch character. It is easy to recover from measles and whooping-cough, but you may never recover from a bad character. If your companions are found to be pulling you away from the right path, then give them up, and choose others. Never forget that books also are companions, and that a bad or foolish book can do an incalculable amount of mischief. You will always be exposed

to temptations, and therefore you must be ever on your guard. Temptations never come in the form of spiders or toads or snakes, but always in forms which look both harmless and pleasing. Remember it is Jesus who says, "Watch."

He also says "Pray." You are always in need of strength. You need all of your own, but no matter how much this amounts to, you need also a strength not your own. Such strength you can obtain from Jesus. He has promised it and he always keeps his promises. All that is necessary in order to obtain it is to want it and ask for it, and then go straight ahead and make use of it. If you do not want it you cannot ask for it, and if you do not ask for it you will not receive it. Speaking to Jesus is prayer. He is always near you so that you can speak to him whenever you wish. He is always your friend, so that his help when asked for is

absolutely certain. One cannot be a Christian without praying, for Jesus' great commandment is "Love God," and we always speak to those whom we love. If Jesus is our friend, then of course we shall speak to him, for it is a queer sort of friendship in which friends do not speak. Paul tells us to pray without ceasing, and the reason why he says this is because he found out that by praying he became strong enough to do all his work. "I can do all things," he says, "through Christ who strengthens me."

The third word of counsel is "Work!" Because many of the men and women in Palestine were working in vineyards, Jesus used to liken the world to a vineyard into which God had sent everybody to work. Jesus was always busy. He went about doing good. He never could endure idle people about him. Whenever men became his followers he sent them out at once to do

something. Every talent must be used, and if ever a single talent is not employed, then the possessor of it is disgraced. The word "work" was often on the lips of Jesus, and another word he was fond of was "service." He liked this word, because it is the work which servants do. Jesus was not ashamed to be called a servant and he told his disciples that this was the proudest name which they could bear. When he saw how eager they were for honors, he told them that to be a servant is the greatest honor which a man can have. The highest place in all the world is the place in which one can make himself most useful to the largest number of needy people. A man's greatness, therefore, according to Jesus, is to be measured by his usefulness, and the one who is sure to be rewarded is the one who has been faithful in the doing of his task. It was the crowning joy of Jesus' life that he was

able to say at the close of his life in speaking to God, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," and what this work was, you may judge from the remark which he once made in the hearing of his disciples, "The son of man is come not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many."

To work most successfully you must work in company with others. One cannot do much all by himself; moreover, it is lonely and one gets discouraged. Jesus intends that his followers shall work together, helping one another, supplying one another's deficiencies, and cheering one another in the midst of difficulties and disappointments. And so he formed a brotherhood or family of which all his followers should be members, and this family is now known throughout the world as the Church of Jesus. Against it no power, however

mighty, will ever be able to prevail. Its mission is to worship and to work. On entrance into it, one is baptized into the name of Jesus, and at stated intervals the Lord's Supper is partaken of, as a reminder that we live and work and conquer solely through the strength of him who loved us and gave himself for us.

THE END

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